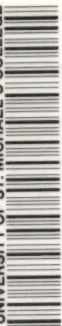


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Life of
Marie-Catherine Putigny

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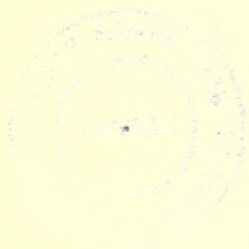
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OF THE

By a Sister of the same Order.

ILCHESTER, MD.

1903.



Imprimatur.

J. CARD. GIBBONS,

Arch. Balt.

BALTIMORE, Sept. 26., 1903.

DECLARATION.

If, in the present volume, the title of Saint be applied to the subject of the narrative, or if extraordinary facts be called miraculous or supernatural, the terms are to be understood as, in no way, forestalling any decision of the Holy See, to whose judgment the whole work is humbly submitted by the translator.

PREFACE

TO THE

ENGLISH EDITION.

The publication of such a life as recorded in the following pages, should not be a matter of indifference to Catholics, since it is a manifestation of God's dealings with the human soul.

When that life has been spent in obscurity and humility, the revelation of its heroic greatness takes the world by surprise. The carnal man is accustomed to conceive great things as necessarily surrounded and accompanied by pomp and display. The old Adam loves bustle, and flourishes in turmoil. Not so with holy souls. As of old, the spirit of God dwells not in storm and tempest, but in humble silence and gentle peace. This principle has the force of an axiom in spirituality, and the *Life* of Marie-Catherine Putigny is but another illustration of it.

God's ways are as manifold as His perfections. The whole life of the just man is only a shadow of some of those perfections. A saint's mission is to personify some special perfection even unto heroism. Every saint has his own personal features, and diversity in unity characterizes their lives. Their souls reflect God, but each one differently. Their lives have been aptly compared to the images of saints on the painted windows of our cathedrals and churches. They seem alike, but let a stream of golden light dart its rays through the glass, and each will

reflect a different color. The light that irradiates each saint is one and the same, but how differently each affects the eye!

God is one. His grace is one. Yet it informs and actuates every life differently, not destroying its nature, but adapting itself to it and completing it, producing variety in unity.

We know little of God's action on the soul compared with what takes place in reality. The sublime triumphs of sanctity and its essential mark consist chiefly in the union of the soul with God. Now, that union is sometimes hidden and mysterious.

It has been repeatedly asserted that it takes a saint to write worthily the life of a saint. Granted, if by this is meant that a saint is a better judge of holiness than one that is not a saint. But if it is meant that a saint has the gift to read absolutely a life, it must be denied. In truth, no man can judge another, no, not even himself, with justice. Man is judged by his words and deeds, and what are these but the surface of life, a veil under which the soul and most of its operations remain hidden. The inner world, so interesting, of thoughts, desires, tendencies, aspirations, dreams, hopes, joys, fears, combats, temptations, and pains,—this is, after all, what makes a man what he really is. For sinners, as well as for saints, the greatest part of their life will remain buried in mystery until the great day, *dies magna*, of solemn revelation.

The inner activity of a soul reminds one of the life of those millions of strange beings, animals and plants, that lie far below the depths of the vast ocean. Nothing on the surface betrays their existence, and thousands of them, even in our scientific and searching age, are called into existence, live and die unknown.

We do, indeed, know little of the saints. Yet what does manifest itself, little as it is, is something so magnificent, so great, so heroic, so sublime, so beyond the dream of man and the powers of nature that it commands admiration.

To Catholics, this *Life* ought to contain treasures of instruction and good example. It is always a fecund teaching to contemplate a soul that desires God's glory and that procures it; a soul that is anxious to do the work, to fulfil the mission for which it has been called out of nothing; a soul whose life is but one burning desire for the glory of the Creator who ordered her to exist.

To the members of her Congregation, to its sweet and gentle founder St. Francis de Sales, and to all the chosen pilgrims that have pitched their tent around the Sanctuary and under the banner of a religious rule, it will prove a glory and a model.

To non-Catholics, to unbelievers, and to all who, like Saul, have their eyes open, but see not, "*Surrexit autem Saulus de terra apertisque oculis nihil videbat*" (Acts ix. 8), if so fortunate as to meet such a book, it will be the refutation of many a prejudice and slander against Religious Orders. They will see that God's arm is not shortened; that the three holy vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience still find followers in the Church of God; that they are still the wings upon which souls rise and soar up to the summits of perfection. They will open their eyes to this truth that, even in modern ages, even in our own times, the Holy Ghost inspires the ancient virtues, and that modern souls can live and thrive on them: "*Vere Dominus est in loco isto, et ego nesciebam*" "Indeed, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." (Gen. xxviii. 16).

To every sincere mind, this Life will give occasion with the Blessed Virgin and Anna to magnify the Lord, who exalts the humble and confounds the proud.

"Suscitat de pulvere egenum et de stercore elevat pauperem ut sedeat cum principibus et solium gloriæ teneat."—"He raiseth up the needy from the dust and lifteth up the poor from the dunghill that he may sit with princes and hold the throne of glory." (I. Kings ii. 8).

"Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles."—"He casteth down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth the humble."

C. D.

MARCH 11, 1903.

Preface

To the French Edition.



In the seventeenth century, Religious Orders responding to all spiritual attractions existed in the Catholic Church. For admission to any one of them, one condition was absolutely necessary, namely, health sufficiently robust to support the austerities of the Rule. This one condition wanting, the doors of these asylums of prayer and immolation remained closed, and generous souls, though drawn by the love of God and urged by the desire for the possession of the Infinite, were forced to remain in a world whose spirit they abhorred, and whose maxims they condemned. It was then that the kind and noble heart of St. Francis de Sales conceived the thought of becoming himself its apostle and protector.

The grand features of this new Order, he at once indicates in these words: "*My very dear daughters, I desire you to be daughters of mortification, and that you live day and night in a spirit of interior sacrifice and perfect abandonment to the will of God, which will hold to you the place of disciplines, fasting, and hair-shirts. I assure you, well-beloved daughters of our common Master, that you will ravish His Heart if you are faithful to all the practices of your Rules, for they are not the work of the human mind.*"

According to his own avowal, the Constitutions that he gave them, were written under the dictation of the Holy Spirit. To the ancient Orders, he left the glory of austerities and high contemplation. That of which he was

to be the Founder should, however, lead like them to the highest sanctity. "*The daughters of the Visitation,*" says our Blessed Father, "*are all called to a very great perfection, and their enterprise is the highest and the most noble that can be imagined, in as much as they aim not only at uniting themselves to the will of God, as all creatures ought to do, but still more to His desires, nay, even to His intentions, I say, even before they have been signified. If there could be anything thought of more perfect, or a degree of greater perfection than of conforming to the will of God, to His desires, and intentions, they would, without doubt, undertake to mount thereto, since they have a vocation that obliges them to do so; and hence, the devotion of this Congregation ought to be a devotion strong and generous . . .*" But he wishes it to be without show, without grandeur: "*The splendor of the daughters of the Visitation is to have no show, and their greatness is in their littleness.*" The saint esteemed himself happy to make physical weakness and the common life serve as a veil of humility thick enough to hide his daughters from the world, as well as from themselves.

It was not long, however, before his little Institute seemed to be menaced. Extraordinary states of union, graces of the highest order, fell to the share of a large number of the religious. St. Francis de Sales saw this with anxiety. Are not the glorious distinctions of Heaven more enervating than those of earth and, consequently, more dangerous? He knew from experience that, apart from solid virtue, there is for the faculties of the soul no possible equilibrium; and that the more richly one is endowed by God, the more are the illusions of self-love to be feared. In union with St. Chantal, his worthy coadjutrix, he sent up to Heaven a sublime prayer of pure

love that God would be pleased to hide the Visitandine life in Himself with Jesus Christ, His Crucified Son. A clear light, which carried with it divine certitude, was vouchsafed St. Chantal that their petition, inspired by the Holy Ghost Himself, had been favorably heard by the Infinite God. In the little land of the Visitation, the waters of grace still flow as pure and as abundant as in the past; the fertility of its banks is the same, but the beauty and brilliancy of its fruits will be hidden from every eye save that of the Heavenly Gardener. This is, however, not so general a rule that Almighty God does not make use of His right to deviate from it when it so pleases Him. There will always be souls in whom the manifestation of divine gifts will not be reserved for eternity. These richly favored souls appear to us as a creation more perfect, destined to show forth all that is fruitful in the teachings of our Holy Founders. God employs in their creation the varied resources of His power, faculties more perfect, richer natural gifts, higher aptitudes, in a word, all that is requisite to prepare the soil for grace and to second its action. From time to time, God will show it to us, to prove that sanctity still dwells in our poor world, and that convents, above all, are the parterres in which the Heavenly Gardener delights to work.

Sister Marie-Catherine was one of those chosen souls. Prevented from her cradle with special graces, she grew up in rare innocence, and consecrated herself to the Spouse of virgins after having supported terrible struggles to preserve her cherished independence. In the shadow of the cloister, she asked of God only labor, silence, and the hidden life. But He who had in her regard designs of ineffable love, led her by a way contrary to her

aspirations, a way which was to conduct her to the very extremes of sorrow and of joy.

The gift of prayer had been granted her in a high degree. But to pray is, to receive; and to give, was the greatest need of her soul. To satisfy it, she gave herself up unreservedly to the crucifying operations of Our Lord, who loved to sow sacrifices along her path. Prayer and mortification soon raised her to a high degree of union. Almighty God set aside His ordinary laws, and multiplied for His faithful servant the marvels of His grace.

For us who lived with her, who followed her in all the phases of her religious life, the principal remembrance of her beautiful spiritual career, as also the sweet perfume that it exhaled, is, without doubt, the astonishing love of Jesus Christ for this simple soul. That God manifests His infinite power by miracles, and presents to our astonished gaze a reflection of His splendor, who can wonder? Is not magnificence, according to our way of thinking, the inseparable reflection of His Supreme Majesty? But that this same God should, in His immensity, so gloriously distinguish a humble creature, and love her with tenderness so indescribable; that, after having granted her in ecstasy the most sublime knowledge, He should descend with her to the most commonplace details of her duties—ah! here is the mystery! Our poor human reason bows before it, and its palpable evidence fills our heart with the sweetest gratitude.

Far be it from us, to make Sister Marie-Catherine's sanctity consist in her extraordinary favors! Such graces are not of themselves meritorious. Yet all the saints declare that they admirably dispose the soul for acts of the highest virtue, above all, for profound self-annihilation

before God. Such, at least, were their effects on the soul of Sister Marie-Catherine.

The prodigality of divine favors was intended not merely for her own perfection. A large part was to be utilized in the apostolic mission to which she was called. Our Lord, after having fitted her for the designs of His love, gave her to His Church, toward which He willed that, from all sides, should flow the currents that were to bring it an increase of strength and life. It is worthy of notice that a common way and a similar attraction seem to unite all those souls of our Order that are marked with a special seal of sanctity. Their chief characteristic is a great attraction to the interior life, and a participation in the sorrows of Jesus crucified for the Redemption of the world. Prayer is the very breath of their soul, but a prayer which, before mounting heavenward, passes through the Garden of the Agony, and becomes impregnated in some manner with the bloody sweat of the Man-God. It is a continual prayer united to that which He made during the ignominy of His Passion and His dolorous ascent to Calvary. But, above all, is it a prayer identified with that which broke from the Heart of the august Victim when uttering His last cry. Behold the efficacious, prayer, which the All-Powerful cannot resist! Let us not be astonished at the duration or the intensity of the sufferings demanded of such souls. What would become of the world if there were not some souls whose fervor and devotedness compensated for the indifference of so many others?

Before beginning the recital of this life, in which are so marvellously blended prayer and suffering for the salvation of the world, we must assure our readers that all we write is founded on the most reliable testimony. The sources from which we have drawn are the following:

First, from the notes of one of Sister Marie-Catherine's Superioresses. Nine years, passed in duties that brought her in frequent communication with Sister Marie-Catherine, permitted her to form upon her virtue a judgment which time only confirmed. Having become Superioress, and fearing lest death might steal from us the secret of her precious gifts, she obtained, under the pretext of directing her with more security in the way on which it pleased God to conduct her, that Sister Marie-Catherine should tell her the story of her whole life. After each recital, she wrote down what she had heard from the servant of God. She declares that the facts, indeed the very words, were recorded with scrupulous exactitude and, as far as possible, Sister Marie-Catherine had been allowed to depict her own soul in her own simple language.

Secondly, from the testimony of another Sister whose duty it was to screen her from the gaze of the pupils at the moments of her extraordinary favors, also to supply her place when the force of the supernatural attraction deprived her of the liberty necessary for the accomplishment of duty.

A short time after the death of our venerated Sister, an abridgment of her life was sent to our convents. We had hastened to communicate to our holy Order the treasure that belonged to it, and of which we deemed ourselves only the depositaries. Requests soon poured in begging us not to confine so edifying a life to our own cloisters, but give to the pious in the world the irrefragable proof of Jesus' love for pure souls. These demands would not have triumphed over our repugnance to reveal to the outer world the divine secrets so carefully guarded, had we not received special encouragement, which seem-

ed to indicate the positive will of God. A sisterly letter from our *Holy Source*,⁽¹⁾ put an end to our irresolution.

"*Many are the desires,*" so they wrote from Annecy, December 22, 1886, "*here formed to have that edifying biography published, for it is capable of inspiring souls with the true love of God, of revealing to them His ineffable goodness, and of teaching them to live in and for Him alone. His enemies, seeking at any cost to annihilate Him, it is very right that His spouses should labor for His glory, and unveil the mysteries of His infinite love. It seems to us that your pious work will be a new monument to the tender predilection of the Divine Spouse for souls who have faith sufficient to increase in His love, and enough confidence to expect everything from His bounty. This biography comes, then, at an opportune moment when doubt, coldness, and indifference toward the sweet Saviour are so prevalent.*" An invitation of such weight cut short our hesitancy. We should fear by longer resistance to contradict desires whose motive-power is God's glory alone. Nevertheless, in yielding to these expressed wishes, we can render to ourselves the testimony that the intentions of St. Francis de Sales have been respected. During the lifetime of Sister Marie-Catherine, silence guarded her extraordinary favors, and the humble obscurity in which she delighted, effectually hid her life in God with Jesus Christ. Now that she is tasting joy unalloyed with Him whom she so loved, she is indifferent to the glory of earth. Her glory is that of Jesus Christ.

Conformably to the decree of our Holy Father, Pope Urban VIII., of March 17, 1626, we declare that, if in

(1) Annecy, the cradle of the Visitation.

the course of this work, we use the title of saint in speaking of her whose life we write, if we reveal facts and revelations that present a miraculous or a prophetic character, we do not wish to pass upon persons and things a judgment reserved for Holy Church, nor do we presume in any manner whatever upon decisions belonging properly to it.

GOD BE PRAISED!

LETTER FROM THE ALMONER OF THE VISITATION OF
HOLY MARY, METZ.

METZ, January 9, 1887.

MY VERY HONORED SISTER,

I shall gladly repeat to you in writing what I have said to you more than once orally. Yes, the venerated Sister Marie-Catherine is portrayed in her Life just as I really knew her during the thirteen years that I passed at the Visitation before her death, and, above all, in the last year when, seeing her every week in the infirmary,

I could have some moments of conversation with her. While reading what you have written, a great part of which is composed of her own words, it seemed to me that I was seeing and listening to her, finding her again in her sweet simplicity, her naiveté, not without penetration, and her sincere humility.

I affirm, also, that the little that I know by myself and my own personal experience of the favors granted her by God for the good of souls, is recounted in her Life with perfect exactitude.

And if you ask my opinion upon the character of these favors, I shall answer that I have not the least doubt as to their divine and supernatural character, because of their childlike simplicity and profound humility, which are the seal of divine operations. Nature cannot produce them, and the effect of the diabolical supernatural is, to destroy them.

With great respect, my very honored Sister,

F. LAURENT,
Canon.

L I F E
OF
MARIE-CATHERINE PUTIGNY,
LAY-SISTER
OF THE VISITATION CONVENT AT METZ.



CHAPTER I.

Her Childhood.

"I bless Thee, my Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones."

Whilst uttering these words, no doubt, Our Lord cast a look of ineffable tenderness upon the humble subject of this memoir, whom He destined for His most intimate communications, and whose long life was strikingly to manifest the predilection of His Divine Heart for "little ones."

Thérèse Putigny was born, March 22, 1803, at Éply, (Meurthe) a village not far from Metz. Her Father was Joseph Putigny, an honest farmer who, when still quite young, had settled in Éply. Imbued with solid religious

principles, he passed his youth in the faithful observance of God's law. After the disastrous Revolution of 1793, he enlisted under the flag of Napoleon I., and took part in the wars of the Empire. The sad defections that he witnessed in the Sanctuary weakened his faith, the impious conversations of his companions in arms obliterated it entirely, and the practice of his Christian duties was abandoned. On his return to the family hearth, he assumed the attitude of a sceptic superior to the prejudices that influence the crowd. Though arrogating to himself the right of exemption from religious thralldom, he took good care to promote religion in his own family, convinced, as he was, of its necessity to curb the passions of the weak and ignorant. He heard his children recite their morning and evening prayers, he would not countenance the absence of a single member of his family from any of the church services, and he kept a vigilant eye over the fast of Good Friday.

His upright character and genial disposition gave him great influence over all with whom he came in contact. The rent from a small property together with his pension sufficed for the maintenance of his six children, two of whom died in infancy. His greatest and, indeed, his only relaxation, after the labor of the day, was to gather them around him, and tell them about the wars in which he had served. His youthful audience listened spell-bound and, when something of his own martial spirit took possession of them, his face glowed with pride.

Madame Putigny (*née* Anne Dardaine) was born at Éply, the home of many of her relations and friends. She was a woman of elevated sentiment, of meek and humble virtue, a model wife and mother. Her happiness would have been perfect, were it not for the religious in-

difference of her husband. This was to her a life-long sorrow.

Among the first of God's numerous gifts to her, Thérèse counted that of a thoroughly Christian mother, capable of directing and maintaining her in the path of virtue. Madame Putigny attached sovereign importance to all that concerned the worship of God, and she usually accompanied her children to church, to keep them in the respect and recollection demanded by the presence of God. When some legitimate cause prevented her doing so, she secured the services of a pious friend on whom she could rely, and she never failed on their return to question her children upon their behavior. Thérèse being the eldest, was the object of her mother's special solicitude. The grace of Baptism had been so lavishly bestowed on her that, at an age at which reason begins only to dawn in other children, she gave evident signs of the gift of piety.

Prayer seemed to be the innate craving of her soul. Everything raised her to God, ever disposed to incline toward His lowly child. When only four years old, she heard her father in a moment of passion give utterance to words little consonant with our holy Faith. The child turned to her mother and said in a distressed tone, "O mamma, if there were no God, to whom should we pray?" — Her recollection during prayer was truly remarkable. Nothing, not even the teasing of her brothers, could divert her attention. If addressed, she gave no sign of having heard, but knelt with downcast eyes until her prayers were ended. "One thing at a time," she would say. "I cannot speak to God and to creatures at the same time." — Her demeanor in church was still more remarkable. In presence of the Divine Majesty, she

seemed oblivious to all around her, and wholly absorbed in God. One day she heard some persons say: "One never sees that child looking about in church."—"Look about in church," exclaimed Thérèse, "to see what is going on!—that would be impossible in the holy presence of God!"—Having witnessed on more than one occasion some levity in the holy place, she remarked sadly: "Surely, these people do not know that the good God is here. They ought to be told of it."

Notwithstanding her habitual recollection, she had the faults generally found in children of her tender years. "As soon as I perceived them," she said, "I turned instinctively toward the statue of the Blessed Virgin in the church, and I used to see her fix her eyes on me with an expression of severity which almost crushed me. But when I had been good and said my prayers well, she appeared to smile on me so sweetly and tenderly that words cannot express it. My first thought, therefore, was: 'What will the Blessed Virgin say?'"

"When the conduct of our little band had been satisfactory during the week, we were recompensed on the following Sunday. My good mother would carefully open a bureau drawer wherein was religiously kept a picture of the Holy Winding Sheet. Then my brothers and I, contemplating the picture on our knees, would silently listen to the words of our pious mother, who endeavored to enkindle in our soul the love of Jesus suffering." The impression thus made upon Thérèse was ineffaceable. The thought of the sacred picture took possession of her mind and heart, followed her everywhere, and prepared her for the intellectual view of the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord, with which she was later to be favored. To contemplate the sufferings endured

by Jesus Christ in expiation of our sins, was for the compassionate heart of Thérèse a devotion full of attraction. But it would, perhaps, have remained sterile, a devotion of mere sentiment, had not the following incident, designed by Divine Providence, inspired her with the desire to have no other motive in her actions than the love of her Crucified Saviour.

One very warm day, Thérèse, laden with vegetables, was returning from a field, a considerable distance from the village. She was almost exhausted by her burden. At last, overcome by fatigue, she deposited her load at the foot of a wayside Cross, and seated herself by it. Turning her head, she saw before her two religious, one of whom made an effort to lift her bag of vegetables. "'Tis very heavy for you, my poor little child," she said in a kind tone. "I should like to know what are your thoughts, and what sustains you in your painful labor." In great surprise, Thérèse answered quickly: "I don't think of anything."—To which the religious replied: "In all that you do or suffer, think on the Cross of Jesus Christ; for, my child, He bore it for you and for all sinners."—With these words, the religious disappeared, and Thérèse resumed her way homeward, bearing in her heart that treasure of truth whose influence was to exercise such sway over her whole life, and to gild with its light her homely every-day duties. Over all her actions will henceforth shine the image of the Crucified. From His Sacred Heart, as from a furnace of love, the devout child was to accept the pains and labors of each day. Her love was to waft them back to Jesus who, in turn, would deign to present them in union with His own, to the Eternal Father.

From her earliest years, Thérèse manifested a tender

love for the unfortunate. Not satisfied with relieving them at the expense of her own privations, she would lead poor children to her good mother, begging her so imploringly to help the cold and hungry little creatures that the kind-hearted woman could not refuse. Sometimes, however, Thérèse's alms were so profuse that her parents found it necessary to forbid the exercise of her charity in their absence. One day, Thérèse being alone in the house, a poor woman, exhausted by hunger and fatigue, presented herself. A struggle arose in the heart of the generous child. What should she do? Should compassion gain the ascendancy over obedience? No, that would displease God. And yet, she could not leave the poor woman without assistance. Ah! quick as thought, she hit upon an expedient. "I have nothing to give you," she said, "but there, on the fire, is a kettle. I do not tell you to help yourself out of it, neither do I forbid you to do so."—The beggar quickly took the hint, and helped herself so plentifully that, when the dinner hour arrived, there was but a slim supply for the family meal. The reprimand that Thérèse received from her parents was never forgotten by the little offender, though it failed to change her mode of action on recurring occasions. Charity was her life, and it was difficult for her to regulate it by prudence. Her most earnest efforts ended only in a compromise between obedience and her favorite virtue.

The love of pleasure soon began to spring up in Thérèse's heart. Her natural disposition powerfully disposed her thereto, for she was gay, lively, and unsuspecting. Pleasure was to her as legitimate as the joy of a good conscience. But to what lengths might it lead her? The danger might have sprung from her very innocence, had not Our Lord, jealous of her purity, strewn her path

with incidents fruitful in salutary lessons. Her delicate conscience, also, guarded her against the frivolity of her youthful years.

One lovely summer evening, she and some other children of the village were dancing in a ring before her own home. It was growing dark, but the children were too much taken up with their sport to notice it. Suddenly a voice was heard: "'Tis almost dark. Children, make haste home!"—"O," exclaimed one of the boys, the son of the steward of the castle,—“we need not fear. Thérèse is still here.” The words pierced Thérèse’s heart like an arrow. Blushing with shame, she entered the house, determined to redeem by her good example the bad use she had made of her ascendancy over her companions, though she did not, for a moment, suspect its extent.

Her wonderful gift of faith soon raised an impassable barrier to her incipient propensity for pleasure. It arrested her first steps toward the declivity down which so many souls descend with frightful rapidity. The following simple incident attests its liveliness. The village children were invited to the castle for a dance. Thérèse, who had not yet made her First Communion, went along with her little companions. On her way to the castle, she kept time to imaginary music with her tiny feet, exclaiming: “How I do love to dance!”—Arrived at the castle, and about to indulge in the coveted amusement, she suddenly found that it had lost for her all charm. Why? Her lively faith had come to the fore. She remembered having heard that danger lurked in this pastime, and that thought was enough to alarm her timorous conscience. But she did not yield to the whisperings of grace without some resistance. “My God,” she said, “I should like to know how I could possibly offend Thee by my dancing.

I have thought it over, but I can find no harm in it.”— Her thought was hardly expressed when a reason, springing from infallible logic, came to aid her faith, and gain for it the victory. Behold it: “M. le Cure and Sister N— said so! Dare I amuse myself at the risk of offending Thee?”—Hell arose before her in all its horrors. “Shall I for a momentary gratification endure eternal punishment?”—she asked. “No, Satan, thou shalt not ensnare me,” and with rapid steps, she hurried home. “This was my first ball,” she used to tell us laughingly, “and I was cured forever of my love for dancing.”

But if an attraction so natural to youth inclined Thérèse to innocent amusements, a remarkable discernment kept her aloof from them when there was likelihood of meeting people who were not faithful to the good God. On a certain occasion, all the little village children were invited to pay their respects to those of a noble family that had come to spend the summer months at Éply. Now, this family was never seen in the parish church, and none of its members practised their religious duties. Thérèse was not ignorant of this fact. When her best clothes were brought out in preparation for the visit, she exclaimed:— “I put on my Sunday clothes to play with children who neither know nor love the good God! No, indeed! I shall not go to the castle.”—Neither the solicitations nor the bantering of her companions could shake her resolution. Go she would not.

She vehemently resented any offence against the honor due to God, and quickly manifested her disapprobation if any reprehensible conduct was committed in her presence. To defend the interests of Almighty God, her precocious zeal supplied her with arguments piquant and original. Her father’s house was a kind of rendezvous

for his friends, most of them old soldiers like himself. It not unfrequently happened that their conversation, pacific enough at first, became heated, especially when it turned upon certain infidel sophisms familiar to the camp. The child seemed to know by instinct that their words were injurious to God, and she would fearlessly and ingenuously reprehend the offenders. At one of these gatherings, a sceptic joined the party and began to ridicule certain pious practices of our holy religion. No one had the moral courage to protest against his wicked remarks. Seeing the honor of Almighty God compromised by such silence, Thérèse jumped up, and addressed the company in a loud voice: "Will no one answer him? He is only an idiot."— Her words raised a general laugh, and the conversation took another turn. "What did your father and mother say to your boldness?" asked some one later. The child answer: "My father scolded me; but my good mother kissed me in secret, and told me always to stand up boldly for the truth."

Later on, we shall meet the same zeal, backed by the same energy, with this difference, however, that Thérèse, from contact with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, will imbibe that sweetness, that tenderness for sinners, which will become for her a power impossible for them to resist. Impiety and revolt against God will be met by indignation as lively, while compassion for the guilty soul will cover it with the mantle of charity.

CHAPTER II.

God's Special Guidance over the Favored Child.

"Thy providence, O Father, governs all things." (*Wisdom*).

The designs of God in the government of the universe are full of love and mercy. His solicitude extends from the tiny blade of grass to the cedars of Libanus, from the veriest animalcule to man himself upon whom He has imprinted His own image. His all-seeing eye penetrates the inmost recesses of the soul. His thoughts are constantly fixed on us. His hand directs us in the mysterious ways of life. His Heart shelters our weakness against the obstacles to salvation which Satan, the world, and our passions multiply under our feet. We cannot doubt, however, that, besides this general providence, Almighty God exerts a special one over certain well-beloved souls. He watches over them with exceptional tenderness, prodigal in His love and kindness toward them. Thérèse was one of these favored souls. The Divine Master Himself directed the most trivial incidents of her life. The lessons of supernatural wisdom that He taught her, clearly proved that He constituted Himself her Counsellor and Guide through the difficulties that beset her path to the summit of perfection. One remarkable feature of this divine guidance was, that of its being in many things contrary to ordinary laws, that of clothing many facts of her life with a miraculous character, as the following pages will show.

Thérèse tells us that, as far back as she could remember, she constantly heard in the depths of her soul a secret

voice, whose authority was much greater than that of her parents, and which sought to influence her most trifling actions. "What It aimed at," she said, "was my liberty, and my liberty was dearer to me than life. O how I defended it before I would yield! One evening, when still a mere child, my parents went to examine some property they thought of buying. Before leaving home, they put me to bed with a strict injunction to stay there. To secure obedience, they locked up my clothes. Scarcely had they left the house, when I caught sound of the village children singing merrily. I could distinctly hear the voices of my little cousins under my window. How could I resist joining in their sports! So importunate became the temptation that I yielded. With one bound, I was out of bed—but my clothes! What should I do? — But can self-will be overcome by difficulties? — Suddenly a bright thought flashed upon my mind,—and no sooner thought than done. I found a large apron and a handkerchief belonging to my mother. Attired in them, I flew to the door. But vain were my efforts to open it. It resisted my every attack, whilst the mysterious Voice repeated: 'Thou shalt not go out!'—'Ah! my God, this is too hard. Why dost Thou forbid me this little pleasure?' Thou shalt not go out!' the Voice repeated.—'I beg Thee, my God,' I entreated, 'Please to let me go out!' 'Thou shalt not go out!' was repeated for the third time. The will of God was formal. I dared no longer resist. 'Ah, well, my God,' said I, 'since Thou dost absolutely forbid me, I shall obey; but it is very hard!'—I returned to my bed, saying: 'My God, I obey Thee to-day, but I make no promises for tomorrow,' so great was my fear of curtailing my liberty."

Whence came this Voice which commanded or forbade,

and which was to play so important a rôle in the life of this docile child? To judge by its effects, it could emanate from the sanctifying Spirit alone, whose powerful breath gave to her soul an irresistible impulse. But whether the divine action manifested itself really by a distinct interior voice, or whether it gave rise to a swift movement, accompanied by a deep and lively sentiment which Thérèse betrayed by words, the effect of the divine guidance was the same in its results. One incident, never forgotten by her, is connected with this same order of facts. We discover in it that powerful, supernatural action constraining Thérèse, though without prejudice to her free-will, by impressing on her soul a lively fear of offending God. Her health had for several months undergone a notable change, evinced chiefly by her intense disgust for food. Unable to absent herself entirely from the family table, she neglected no opportunity to steal away from it. Her father, however, habituated to military discipline, sanctioned no such dispensation. He reprimanded her severely for what he called caprice. But in vain did she try to eat. Her efforts resulted in painful vomiting, which led to his no longer forcing her to overcome her repugnance. "One day," she says, "I was, as usual, unable to take part in the family dinner. Some hours later, the pangs of hunger began to make themselves felt. Being alone in the house, and knowing that there was a ham hanging in the chimney, I cut from it a large slice, stuck it on the end of a knife, and broiled it over the coals in the grate. It was a tempting morsel, and I was in the act of putting it to my mouth when it fell back into the fire. Partly from hunger, partly from gluttony, I made three attempts to satisfy my ravenous craving for it, but each time it fell back. Entering into myself, I heard the voice of

Our Lord severely reproaching me for my fault. My heart was torn for having offended Him and, on my knees, my face bathed in tears, I implored pardon in a loud voice and most penitent words. So full of contrition was I for my fault that I did not perceive the presence of my parents, who had returned. Mute witnesses of a scene, of whose cause they were ignorant, they asked themselves whether I were not a prey to delirium. They questioned me as to the subject of my grief, and wished to know to whom I was speaking. I hung my head, but dared not answer. I was covered with confusion by the occurrence, which I felt was supernatural, despite my utter ignorance of that order of things.

"I loved my mother devotedly. Never was I so happy as when I sat on a little stool at her feet doing my work in silence. From time to time, I would raise my eyes to look at her, and her smile would encourage me to continue my work. To know that she was satisfied with me, was my greatest pleasure and best recompense. But the time was approaching when death was to rob me of her cherished presence. I was then about ten years old. On a certain day, my father went to the city to draw some money, the earnings of long and hard labor. With it he intended to pay for some property which he had lately purchased. On his way home, he was joined by an acquaintance, to whom he spoke freely of the money in question. Though seeming to lend an indifferent ear to my father's words, the man was all the time planning in his heart how he should get possession of the coveted treasure. At last, having reached a very retired place on the road where human aid was impossible, he knocked my father down, and snatched the money from him before the latter even dreamed of defending himself. This

unfortunate attack, which might have cost him his life, rendered it impossible for my father to meet the engagement which he held sacred, and my mother's death was hastened by the sad affair."

Thérèse had one day left her mother for only half an hour, and with all the vivacity of a child of her years, she was playing ball at no great distance from home. Soon her attention was attracted, her curiosity excited, on seeing so many going in and out of her house. A secret presentiment made her heart beat, and soon she caught the words: "Does Thérèse know?"—Filled with anxiety, the poor little girl made her way through the crowd to the bedside of her dying mother. When Madame Putigny caught sight of her sorrow-stricken child, she motioned one of the attendants to take her out of the room. Did she fear a hemorrhage, and that it might make too painful an impression on the child? or did she wish to guard against the tenderness of her own maternal heart? We know not. But Thérèse obeyed, and suffered herself to be led from the harrowing scene. Not many minutes after, they told her that her mother had gone to a better world. Poor little Thérèse was now motherless.

A cloud of sadness fell upon the whole village on the death of Madame Putigny, for she had by her virtues and kindly manners attracted the esteem and friendship of her neighbors. All were desirous to prove their sympathy by lavishing the most delicate attentions upon her bereaved family. One of them took Thérèse home with her. She tried in every way to dispel her grief and to prevent the child's hearing the funeral bells. Thérèse did not know the hour appointed for the burial, but she guessed it; and, although a vigilant eye was kept on her, she

made her escape out of a window, and ran to the cemetery. There she found herself face to face with her mother's coffin, which they were in the act of lowering into the grave. Without a moment's reflection and to the consternation of the by-standers, she threw herself on it, crying piteously: O my mother! No, they shall not take my mother from me!"

Deep grief often matures the soul and develops a wisdom which, under ordinary circumstances, would be the fruit of life-long experience. And so it happened to Thérèse. Her mother's death aroused her faith and penetrated her mind with this truth, that out of God all is nothing, since an instant suffices to deprive us of what the heart holds most dear. To what should she now attach herself? Wounded in her deepest and tenderest feelings, the things of this world were henceforth to appear to her eyes as nothing. Without a moment's hesitation, she gave to God that heart too loving and too pure, to find in this world the place of its repose.

She had seen her good mother fulfil devotedly the humble duties of her life, silently and uncomplainingly accepting weariness and difficulties in her pursuit of the happiness of those around her. Thérèse proposed to imitate her and, from that time, her whole ambition was to retrace in her own conduct the beautiful example left her. Almighty God strengthened her good desires by that secret impulse of which we have spoken. Such was its empire that, although nature dared not resist, yet it could hardly refrain from complaining of its requirements.

"I now began my mission of eldest sister," she says. "My father, three brothers, and myself composed our little family. The household duties fell to my lot and, although I brought to the work all the good will that

could be expected from one of my years, I had often to reproach myself for my sallies of temper.

“One day, having allowed myself to be carried away by my natural impetuosity, I received a correction whose impression will never be effaced. I wanted to look after a certain potato patch, but before doing so, I hurried to dress my youngest brother, then between two and three years old. The little fellow was very unwilling to submit, and I forgot myself so far as to strike him. Hardly had I done so, when I heard the well-known voice of my mother gently and sorrowfully reproaching me. ‘Why treat your brother so?’ she asked. Speechless from surprise and full of repentance, I asked myself whether I was not the sport of some illusion. But my little brother, who, also, had heard the voice, stretched his arms in the direction whence it came, and exclaimed! ‘Mamma! mamma!’—Weeping bitterly, I clasped the child in my arms, and promised my regretted mother never again to merit her disapproval.”

Instead of the tender care, the sweet caresses of a mother, Thérèse was now to experience the trial of utter loneliness, a bitter trial, indeed, and one that faith alone could sweeten. If it be true that one sorrow gives birth to another, is it not one of the compassionate forms of the Divine Master’s love? In presenting us His cross, He is careful not to let its whole weight fall upon us at once, lest it crush us. The severing of family ties beneath this humble roof was to be the entrance into the Way of the Cross along which Thérèse was called to walk.

Almighty God’s justice seemed at that period to weigh heavily upon France. It was desolated by a triple scourge: The Allied Army and typhus fever in 1814, and famine in 1816. Many of the families of Éply were reduced to

want. M. Putigny suffered as well as his neighbors, though no word of complaint fell from his lips. "God is good," said he, "in leaving me my children," alluding to the numerous victims of the fever. Thérèse long retained a painful remembrance of the passage of the Allied Army through Éply. One of the Generals was lodged in her father's house, M. Putigny having received a formal order to allow no one to have intercourse with him. One day, an officer presented himself at the house, and endeavored to force an interview with the General, threatening to thrust his sword into any one who would oppose his entrance. M. Putigny, nothing intimidated by the threat, took his stand before the door, determined to guard the trust confided to him. The officer brandished his sword in fury, and pointed it at the breast of the intrepid veteran. Thérèse, seeing the danger to which her father was exposed, sprang to the officer's side, and clung to his up-raised arm, hoping to draw upon herself the blow intended for her father. At this sight, the officer dropped his sword, exclaiming: "Bless your child, Monsieur, for she has saved your life!" Filial devotedness lent the noble-hearted child courage to rise above fear.

It was now time for Thérèse to prepare for First Communion. Her tender and solid piety rendered her soul strong to cope with the difficulties of her responsible position at so early an age.

"At twelve years," she tells us, "I made my First Communion. Of that beautiful day, one fault remains fresh in my memory. Among the children who received with me Holy Communion for the first time, was one of my own height, the child of poor parents whose reputation was not without blemish. I trembled at the thought of having her assigned me as a partner. God permitted her

to fall to me, and that we should walk the very last. O what a trial for my self-love! I was still struggling with my feelings of repugnance when the procession of young communicants passed my own home. My father was at one of the windows. He saw by my manner the embarrassment under which I was laboring, for so great was my confusion that I dared not raise my head. Tapping at the window, he made me a sign to hold myself erect. I instantly obeyed with the thought, 'My father is proud of his child!' Alas! my own vanity I neither saw nor wished to see. By degrees, my proud feelings subsided, the good God again spoke to my heart, and again His voice was heeded. O then what regrets for having displeased Him! What sincere desires to expiate my fault, to overcome my vanity!"—Thérèse's upright nature soon gained the ascendancy. In bitterness of heart, she reflected upon her conduct. She blushed with shame at having allowed a creature to claim her attention at a moment in which the thought of Our Lord should have entirely absorbed her soul, melting it into love and thanksgiving. Her vanity, to whose existence she was now fully alive, she determined to pursue to the death. God lent assistance to her resolve, though without letting her taste in all their sweetness the fruits of victory. It was by repeated experience of her own weakness, that she was to acquire self-knowledge, the foundation necessary to humility; and her very faults were to concur in the accomplishment of God's great designs over her. She herself will, with her customary candor, prove this to us.

"About a year after my First Communion," she says, "seeing one of my brothers severely corrected, I so far forgot myself as to exclaim angrily: 'What a torture to live in this house!'—'I will soon put an end to your tor-

ture,' retorted my father coolly. 'I shall send you out of it.'—He kept his word, and that sooner than I anticipated."

Providence seemed to favor M. Putigny's resolve by sending him a visitor in the person of M. Gautiez, a merchant of standing belonging to Metz. Hearing what had passed the evening before, he offered to receive Thérèse into his own family for a while. The child's punishment seems severe. But we must remark that if, to maintain his own authority, M. Putigny showed himself somewhat harsh, he still thought less of his paternal rights than of guarding his daughter against the dangers of the future. He was a man of too much judgment not to perceive that her surroundings were by no means favorable to the growth of the sweet and gentle virtues that shone so brightly in her good mother. It was these virtues that M. Putigny desired to see in Thérèse, and now that the means of cultivating them in her were offered, he stifled the whisperings of natural affection and self-interest. The separation from her would not be long. A year or two would, he thought, be sufficient to fit Thérèse for her sphere in life, and then he could recall her home. Very different, however, was the Divine from the paternal plan. The child's future will reveal with what force and sweetness God made all things work together unto good, even for the admirable end that He had in view.

CHAPTER III.

Therese Leaves Home.

The hour came, at last, for Thérèse to bid farewell to her home, her brothers, to all whom she loved. Too proud to shed a tear, she allowed no one to see her sharp suffering at the bitter separation. She reached her new home without being expected by the family. While M. Gautiez went forward to announce the unlooked-for arrival, and dispose for a kindly welcome, Thérèse remained in the hall. "Rosette," said M. Gautiez, to his wife, "we have already nine children, but behold, I have brought you a tenth."—"She is welcome," exclaimed Madame Gautiez to the shrinking child, who was now ushered in. Madame Gautiez took the poor little thing to her heart so maternally that Thérèse felt at once that she should find in her not only a friend and adviser, but a true mother.

Nothing could be better regulated than the Gautiez household. The good employment of time, the wise economy with which it was directed, the generous charity exercised toward the indigent, the gentle authority of the master and mistress, the respectful attachment of the domestics, formed a spirit of union which might be compared to that which reigns in a convent. Family prayers were regularly said, and at them not the slightest levity was ever tolerated. M. Gautiez's recollected air while presiding at these devotions, was a far more forcible exhortation than words. "When I remember that God is present, and that it is to Him I am speaking, it would be impos-

sible for me to turn my mind or thoughts elsewhere," he used to say.

Thérèse was treated as a child of the family, intellectual culture apart. She wrote correctly enough. The humble position which, to all appearances, she was to fill in after life, called for nothing more. If it is true that knowledge inflates, is it not especially so when it severs the ties that ought to exist between relations? Has it not frequently happened that a person of lowly condition, educated above her sphere in life, has been rendered miserable on that account? Her near relations must necessarily share in her unhappiness. Pride leads her to insolate herself, and she holds society responsible for not assigning to her the rank and distinction due her pretended merit. Such an error dries up the source of every noble aspiration.

Thérèse had her place at the family-table and when, through indisposition, Madame Gautiez was obliged to be absent, it was she who preformed the office of substitute, with gravity and solicitude far in advance of her years. The little world around her instinctively felt the ascendancy of her character, and evinced to her deferential affection. They relied on her capability to manage the household, and never was confidence better justified. Her practical intelligence; her keen observation, which took in all things at a glance; her spirit of order; in a word, her wonderful aptitude, made her a treasure to her adopted family, whilst her tact, her devotedness, her amiable gaiety, attracted all hearts. Nothing failed when Thérèse took part in it; nothing succeeded without her helping hand. Once, however, the unlimited confidence reposed in her cost her many tears.

The day approached for her to receive the Sacrament

of Confirmation. To prepare her soul for a more abundant infusion of the Holy Spirit, she determined to communicate that morning. It so happened that Madame Gautiez was at the time convalescing after a serious illness. She had been dieted, but now the physician allowed her some chicken broth. Thérèse would permit no one to prepare it but herself. Radiant with satisfaction, she was presenting a cup of it to the dear invalid, when she suddenly exclaimed: "O My God! What have I done? I have tasted it!"—"My child," said Madame Gautiez in a reassuring tone, "it is all imagination. I am certain that you did not swallow any."—Thérèse was dismayed at the thought of renouncing the wished-for happiness of communicating that morning. She had but little time to reflect, she must decide at once what course to follow. After a short struggle, she presented herself at the Holy Table. But her action was not pleasing to God, who soon evinced His disapproval. Almighty God frequently acts thus toward souls especially dear to Him, souls in whom He will not suffer the slightest infidelity. In giving much, He requires much. When the time came for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, that is at the end of the ceremony of Confirmation, Thérèse looked in vain for the Sacred Host in the ostensorium. To It her mind and heart were irresistibly drawn; but It had disappeared, leaving a vacancy inexplicable to the child. Could she be deceived? Embarrassed and agitated, she questioned her neighbor, and learned that only to herself was the Sacred Host invisible. Realizing the gravity of her fault in the chastisement that so soon followed, she shed abundant tears. Not till she had made a general confession, did she recover with peace of soul the power to see the Sacred Species. We hazard no comment on

the above, though we may remark that, in after years, when speaking of this circumstance, Thérèse did not look upon it as an act accomplished with the full knowledge and free will necessary to constitute a mortal sin. Its consequences, however, produced a salutary reaction in her soul. It incited her to rise superior to the weakness of her inclinations, and to spiritualize her efforts more in accordance with God's great designs upon her.

Thérèse's virtues were confined to the faithful discharge of her daily duties in the family circle. She had as yet been called to nothing more. Providential circumstances, however, were soon to furnish an occasion for their wider exercise. We have already spoken of the interior Voice to which she yielded without the power to account for the movement that forced her to act. One day, the family were chatting pleasantly on the balcony. Thérèse felt secretly urged to go down stairs. She obeyed, and instinctively followed the hand that led her. At last, she reached the river's bank. There she beheld, floating on the surface of the water, a piece of blue stuff. To seize it and draw it to land, was the work of a moment, though it cost her a mighty effort. She had saved a drowning man, a young mechanic in the act of committing suicide. Prompt and effectual remedies soon restored the poor young man. But Thérèse did not consider her mission ended. She inquired into the dispositions of his soul, and found that he had broken every tie that bound him to his God. Her zeal was roused. She spared no pains to lead him back to the practice of his religious duties. Fervent prayers, pious reading, pressing exhortations, were successively brought to bear upon his callous heart. Grace, at length, completed what gratitude had begun, and the young man consented to see a priest. He was

soon reconciled to God, and he gave to the minister of salvation the consolation of seeing him persevere in the fervent discharge of his duty. Such were the first fruits of Thérèse's apostolate. Having snatched a soul from the demon to attach it to Jesus Christ, what joy filled her heart! What ineffable consolation was hers! The future held for her still other conquests; but at the price of what sufferings was she to gain the victory!

Eight years had glided by since Thérèse left her father's house to become an inmate in this truly Christian family. In all that time she had seen and heard nought but what spoke of virtue. But the hour of tribulation was fast approaching, and she was to be separated forever from her cherished friends.

M. Gautiez was too dear to God not to share in the Cross, the most precious pledge of His love to man. The destruction of his house by fire, repeated failures in business, the wreck of two of his vessels, together with other reverses, tested his patience and submission to God's holy decrees. Not one word of complaint fell from the lips of the heroic Christian. "I have never forgotten," said Thérèse, "the answer that I received one day when my faith, much less firm than his, led me to question him. 'Whence comes it,' I asked, 'that one who does not sanctify the Lord's day seems to abound in blessings from God, whereas you, who serve Him so faithfully, are overwhelmed by sorrows?'"—"My child," he answered, "it is because the least thing done for God is of such value in His eyes that there is nothing on earth that can recompense it."

Their multiplied vicissitudes led to the departure of the family that had so lovingly received and sheltered the young orphan. Before leaving for their new home in

Hâvre, they begged Thérèse to accompany them, for their grief would be greatly augmented by the pain of separation from her. Thérèse's kind heart inclined to accept the proposal, but her father gave a peremptory refusal. He was unwilling for her to go to so great a distance. He urged his own advanced age, his increasing infirmities, the pain of a long separation; and, besides, was it not right that he should now enjoy the companionship of his daughter, and experience the effects of her filial devotedness?

Thérèse's parting from the Gautiez family was all the more sorrowful as M. Gautiez's straitened circumstances rendered her services invaluable. To share in the common privations and sufferings, to afford to all its members the consolation springing from her lively faith, seemed to her a sweet duty. But obedience decided otherwise.

Her preparations were already begun for her return home when the voice of God called her in another direction, and she accepted, though regretfully, the position of companion to a certain Madame de Maud'huy. Having been a witness of Thérèse's usefulness, and admiring the rich gifts of nature and grace lavished upon her by Almighty God, she had often envied Madame Gautiez the possession of such a treasure. The departure of the Gautiez family seemed to her a providential circumstance for the realization of her pious desires. She wrote to M. Putigny begging permission to keep his daughter with her for awhile. A great mission about to begin at the time favored her project, and the coveted leave was granted.

Before introducing Thérèse to the reader in the discharge of her new duties, let us follow to their future home the noble Christain friends whom God had used as

the instruments of His providence over her. M. Gautiez held at Hâvre the responsible position of agent for a large commercial house, when the scourge of the cholera was, in 1832, hurled by God on guilty France. As if Divine Justice demanded a pure victim before striking the guilty, M. Gautiez was the first to fall under the fatal scourge. Having nothing now to retain her at Hâvre, Madame Gautiez returned to Metz, where she was received with that holy sympathy which the Christain acceptance of trials ever excites. Her friends vied with one another in furnishing means for the support of her children. The youngest girls were received by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart to complete their education. One of them was blessed with a religious vocation, and the youngest son is today, by his piety and virtue, an ornament to the priesthood.

Madame Gautiez opened a millinery establishment. Thérèse was not slow to lend a helping hand to her former benefactress. She was now in the convent, and known as Sister Marie-Catherine. Besides giving to Madame Gautiez all the sewing of the boarders, she used her influence with their parents in behalf of the struggling family. When their difficulties weighed heavily upon them, Madame Gautiez and her children would come to pour their sorrows into the heart of their good Sister Marie-Catherine, whose encouraging words aided not a little in strengthening them to bear up under the Hand that was afflicting them in fatherly mercy.

But it is time to return to Thérèse in her new home with Madame de Maud'huy.

CHAPTER IV.

Therese in her New Home with Madame de Maud'huy.

In the Gautiez household all was life, animation, and unrestrained gaiety. In the home of Madame de Maud'huy, Thérèse found just the reverse. Perfect solitude and an almost claustral silence reigned. The atmosphere breathed of God, everything favored the thought of Him. In the calm and recollection of this home, Thérèse spent many happy days, fulfilling her new duties, which consisted in superintending the domestic arrangements of the family. Here, again, she exhibited the vigilance and aptitude with which God had endowed her. Madame de Maud'huy felt safe in placing the general management of the house in her hands, sure that she would embrace even its least details. Her tact and delicacy in the discharge of her confidential position shielded her from the attacks of envious tongues. The family consisted of Madame de Maud'huy, her daughter, at this time a pupil of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, and two sons, who were under the tutelage of the Curé of the place.

Once every month, the children came home for a day's holiday. Their noisy pastimes, their hearty enjoyment of freedom from the restraint of school, was, indeed, a break in the quiet routine of their home; but holiday over, things went on as usual. Madame de Maud'huy gave Thérèse the charge of visiting them when her own health or occupations prevented her doing so herself. One of these visits was signalized for the young girl by a

singular stroke of Divine Providence. We shall give it in her own words.

“We had planned that I should make a surprise visit to Madame de Maud’huy’s two sons. One beautiful spring morning, I left Metz with some persons going to the same place. Either through inadvertence or a desire of greater solitude, I kept at some distance behind the party, and soon lost sight of them. Arriving at the outskirt of a wood, I came upon several roads, and hesitated which to follow. Whilst standing in doubt, I saw a modest-looking youth approaching. I asked him the shortest way to the village. He pointed out the road, which I took. After pursuing it for some time, I began to fear that, after all, I was wrong; so, I retraced my steps and took another. Along it I wandered for hours, not sure as to where it would lead me. Suddenly, I was seized with fear. ‘I am alone,’ I said to myself. ‘O my God, I am lost in these woods! What shall I do? Evil may befall me.’—I cast a suppliant look toward Heaven, and light dawned upon my soul. Again I said: ‘O how imprudent I have been to trust to myself! I forgot that God condemns him who trusts to his own guidance. Is it not just that I should suffer the punishment that I so richly deserve?’ Full of these thoughts, I reached a glade in the wood. Weary and anxious, I fell on my knees at the foot of a tree and offered to God the sacrifice of my life. I abandoned myself to His holy will, begging only the grace not to offend Him. Then I sat down to rest and await help. Only a few moments elapsed, when I heard the sound of approaching footsteps. To my joy and surprise, I saw a priest coming toward me. It was the village Curé, to whose house I was vainly directing my steps. ‘Is it you, my child?’ said he. ‘Where are

you going?'—'To your house, M. le Curé' I answered. 'I started for Metz, and something urged me to take this road in preference to the shorter one by which I usually go.'—In this incident as in every other, Almighty God watched with special care over this child of predilection. The lessons of divine wisdom, taught her under the most varied forms, furnished her with spiritual food, confirmed her attraction for the supernatural life and, at the same time, pointed out to her the obstacles that could prevent its development. Our Lord enlightened her mind, touched her heart, strengthened her will and, if we may be allowed the expression, seemed unable for a moment to lose sight of the end He had in view, namely, that of filling her soul with the plenitude of His love. The time had now come for a grace still more powerful to elevate the favored disciple of the Saviour, and place her in a new sphere, the sphere of the little Visitation, there to die to self and live for Him alone. To this she was led by a chain of providential circumstances.

Half a century had glided down the stream of time since the year of Jubilee. The disastrous tempests that had desolated the Church and produced a state of fermentation throughout the nations of Europe, had, in 1800, raised a strong barrier against the promulgation of the Decree. In 1825, the third year of the Pontificate of His Holiness, Leo XII., the treasures of mercy were, at last, opened, and the Catholic world invited to the court, if we may so speak, of a new reign of love and grace. The Jubilee was inaugurated by a mission, which infused into souls a breath of new life and fervor. Faith, which had lain dormant so long, awoke at the sound of the great truths, whose powerful impression took deep hold on the masses. The touching eloquence of the sermons, the

pomp and magnificence of the ceremonies, the strains of enchanting music, in which the voices blended so harmoniously as to form but one, penetrated heaven with the cry of repentance and love. This striking demonstration of the magnificence of divine worship in the Catholic Church, electrified souls and exercised a magnetic influence in drawing sinners into her pale. Thérèse had always been attracted to any form of piety tending to promote the glory of God and the exaltation of His holy Name. She was consumed with the desire to have Him known, loved, and served by all hearts, praised and blessed by all tongues. Recognizing the influence of external worship on the mind of the people, it was her happiness to contribute to the decoration of the church, to the ornamentation of its altars, and to its sacred chants. Whatever savored of our holy religion, whatever elevated the soul to God, and favored the advent of His reign in hearts, could count on her devoted cooperation. All her leisure moments were given to such work for the service of Holy Church.

One day, a certain young girl, impressed by Thérèse's assiduity at the exercises of the Mission, accosted her, begging her to take a little interest in her special welfare. She told Thérèse in confidence that she belonged to a respectable family, but one extremely hostile to religion, and that she had been reared in utter ignorance of her duty as a Christian. She had through curiosity followed the crowd to the Cathedral, where grace awaited her, and where all that she saw and heard aroused in her an indefinable sense of the supernatural. Its unveiling had entranced her soul, and her only desire now was to harmonize her conduct with the light of Faith. The change in her manner of acting awoke the apprehensions of her

parents. They began to ply her with questions, to which she returned straightforward answers, dissimulating nothing. A violent scene ended one day in her expulsion from home.

Thérèse with her wonted kindness introduced the young girl to the family that had opened their hearts and arms to herself. She begged and obtained her request, to harbor her protégé for a time. She utilized the opportunity thus afforded to instruct the young convert and strengthen her in the path of duty. Marianne, as the young girl was called, imbibed from her new friend a salutary horror for worldly maxims, and learned to appreciate the beauty of virtue. It captivated her heart whilst enlightening her mind. The seed sown by Thérèse fell not on the highway, but upon good ground; for she soon had the great consolation to see Marianne aspiring to the cloistered life, which seemed to her newly converted soul the only place of repose on earth. The two friends possessed a similiar inclination for austerities. The question was, which would excel the other in their practice. To sleep on the floor, a fagot for a pillow, to mix bitter herbs with their food, and to allow nature scarcely sufficient to support life, to labor assiduously, to deny self the most innocent satisfactions, to trample human respect under foot for the sake of devout exercises, whose practice would lead to the happiness of being contemned for love of Jesus Christ,—such were the means by which these fervent souls endeavored to secure for themselves an intimate union with their Divine Spouse.

“I wish to become a religious in order to do penance,” said the young convert. “If my parents refuse me a dowry, I shall become a lay-sister. That rank will suit me better as a life of reparation, of expiation.”—A zealous

Jesuit Father encouraged her in her pious design, and offered to use his influence with the Ladies of the Sacred Heart to obtain her admission into their Congregation. His application was answered favorably, and he lost no time in making known to the two friends the success of his efforts. And so, Thérèse and Marianne parted, but not before making a compact to visit each other at the hour of death provided Almighty God favored their agreement.

Four years had passed since the event recorded above. Thérèse, also, had become a consecrated spouse of Christ, when one night, she saw standing in silence before her a religious clothed in a habit to her quite unknown. Next day, she saw the same apparition and in the same silence. She told her Mistress of it, but Sister Marie-Louis de Sales de Condé, such was her name, lent an incredulous ear to the strange tale. Again, the religious appeared for the third time, accompanied by our deceased Sister Paul Amélie G—. In an affectionate, though reproachful, tone, she uttered these words: "Ah, do you not recognize Marianne?"—and disappeared. One of our out-sisters was immediately despatched to the Sacred Heart convent to verify the reality of the vision. She found that Thérèse's former companion had, indeed, departed this life three days previously, and had kept her promise to bid her old companion a last farewell. But we have anticipated events. Not without deriving salutary fruit for our own soul do we work for the salvation of others. The apostolic spirit, in whatever degree it may exist, is an abundant source of grace. After leaving the heart that exercises it, it flows back again laden with benedictions. Thérèse's vocation to the religious life developed simultaneously with that of her friend. Some years before she

had received the first germs, and later a mysterious dream, which presaged the call of God in the dim future, impelled her to dispose herself to accept the invitation and to prepare for it by exact fidelity.

Let us hear her own account of it. "When I was about fifteen years old," she says, "I had a symbolical dream. It left so deep an impression on my mind that time could not efface its most trivial circumstance. I dreamed that I was walking in the country with several young village-girls. We amused ourselves gathering hazel-nuts. After awhile, we came across a grotto which we had never before seen. Our curiosity was roused. We opened the low door that closed its entrance, and found ourselves in a dark stairway. On the first step to the right lay matches and a blessed candle; to the left was a box of perfume. One of my companions lighted the candle, and tried to descend into the grotto, but her light went out. A second and third made a similar attempt, but with no better success. My turn came, and I succeeded in descending twelve or thirteen steps, when I saw the Blessed Virgin and the Infant Jesus. Mary addressed me in these words: 'Do all that my Son will tell you.'—Then placing the Divine Child in my arms, she permitted me to caress Him in the fondest manner. I reascended the steps in a transport of love and joy. On leaving the grotto, I saw a large garden in which many nuns were walking. Six years later, when I crossed the threshold of the Visitation, I was deeply touched on recognizing the costumes and places that I had seen in my dream. The words of the Blessed Virgin were as fresh in my memory as if spoken only the day before, and then and there I resolved to make them the rule of my whole life."—Such, however, is the inconstancy of even the

best inclined natures that, after the departure of her companion, Thérèse in full enjoyment of a liberty that favored her piety, would, perhaps, have indefinitely postponed the serious examination of her vocation, had not a providential circumstance hastened its execution. Another of her friends, Mlle. Justine Gaudré, on the eve of entering our convent, went to bid her adieu. The angelic piety of this young girl had completely captivated Thérèse. Justine belonged to one of those patriarchal families in which honor and virtue seem hereditary. Their disinterested fidelity to all true principles signalized itself during the "Great Revolution." At the peril of their own life, they offered an asylum to the ministers of Jesus Christ persecuted for their Faith. They revived in their noble conduct the spirit of the primitive Church. The friendly relations existing between this family and that of M. Gautiez had brought the two young girls frequently together, consequently, the moment of separation was a particularly painful one for Thérèse. "How happy I should be were I in your place!" she exclaimed in a tone of earnestness that did not escape Justine's mother. The words were repeated to Thérèse's confessor, who lost no time in questioning her as to her future. She avowed the terrible struggle between nature and grace going on in her soul, and ended by resigning herself to the good Father's direction. He, inspired by Almighty God, solicited and obtained from Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan her admission to our convent.

Madame de Maud'huy, whose tenderness for the motherless girl had been that of a true mother, was deeply wounded at not having been consulted on the delicate question. She was altogether opposed to Thérèse's design, which she denominated premature, and she did all

in her power to frustrate its accomplishment. Thérèse, strange to say, felt her repugnance increase as the time drew near for her final decision. "To obey the repeated calls of grace," she said, "I resolved to ask my father's consent, so that I could feel satisfied at having done all in my power to fulfil the will of God. I was, however, all the while nourishing a secret hope of retaining my much-prized liberty. With hesitating steps, I took my way to the village, trembling lest the dreaded consent might be granted. I ceased not repeating as I went along: 'My God, inspire my father to refuse his consent to my becoming a religious.'—My father showed great pleasure at seeing me. After exchanging affectionate greetings, I began to explain to him my errand, and laid before him my vocation in a few words. He rose silently from his chair, clasped his hands behind his back, and paced the floor to and fro. He seemed to be struggling against a violent temptation. It was evident that divers thoughts were flitting across his soul. In what would they result? I had designedly presented my petition in person thinking that, on seeing me again, paternal love would exert its claims, and that he would leave no means untried to keep me with him

"Kneeling, I silently awaited my doom. Half an hour passed, half an hour of anguish. At last, my father broke the silence, and the words fell on my astonished ears: 'I cannot oppose the will of God!'—I was, as it were, struck dumb. His reply, so calm, so Christian, obliged me to smother in my heart the disappointment that I was too proud to show. I had reckoned on mountains of difficulties, but lo! every thing now favored my entrance into the cloister. It was impossible not to see in this the working of the divine action of Providence.

‘I surrender, O Lord,’ I exclaimed. ‘Thou art the Almighty. Who can resist Thee, and maintain peace of heart!’ ”

On her return to Metz, Thérèse went at once to inform Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan of the result of her interview with her father, expressing her desire at the same time to delay her entrance for a few months, in order to settle her affairs. But Mother Marie-Thérèse with the rare discernment that characterized her, detected the weak point in the young aspirant’s argument. She replied that once a determination is taken, it should be executed immediately, and that her reasons for prolonging her stay in the world were only secondary ones. Thérèse hearkened to the voice of her adviser; but when she heard the convent-door close behind her, she felt a chill of dread run through her like an electric shock. “Hell opened suddenly before me,” she said, “could not have caused me greater fright.”

CHAPTER V.

Therese Enters the Convent of the Visitation.

At their very first meeting, Thérèse had been deeply impressed by the rare qualities of the Superioress of the Visitation, at Metz, Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan. We think that a rapid sketch of this remarkable woman should be given here, not only on account of her own intrinsic worth, but through a motive of gratitude. We look upon it as our duty to present to our readers some of the many works of heroic patience and unshaken faith

accomplished by this Superioress during the troublous epoch of which we are writing.

Mother Marie-Thérèse was born at Metz, where her father, the Marquis de Tholozan, held the office of Administrator-General of the subsidies for Lorraine. She was only eight years old when her pious mother was called to a better world, leaving behind her eight children, Josephine being next to the eldest. She and her elder sister were placed with the Ursulines in our city. Among them was a religious of great merit connected with the Tholozan family, who devoted herself to the care of Josephine and her sister. Their education was finished just as the Revolution of 1789 broke out. Their father, for financial reasons, removed with his family to Switzerland. His most earnest desire was to see his daughters contract brilliant marriages. In vain, did they implore his permission to enter religion; all their efforts were fruitless. Père de Diesbach, their director, informed his youthful penitents that the Archduchess Marianne, sister of the Austrian Emperor, Francis I., was contemplating the foundation of a religious Congregation in Rome under the title of Ladies of Faith, or of the Sacred Heart. The two sisters again vainly strove to obtain from their father the Marquis, the long desired consent. A formal refusal met every entreaty. Disgusted with a life so little in conformity with their holy desires, but strong in the strength of the Lord, after many disappointments and delays, they were at last free to follow the divine call. They entered the new Congregation. But alas! here again was encountered another surprise and disappointment. They found that their duties near the Archduchess were those of a maid of honor, for she retained all the etiquette due her rank. Did she go from one apartment to another, a

sentinel presented arms before her! She had her reception days, and she took frequent drives, a visit to some sanctuary serving as an excuse. It was still the world, though without its dangers. Our two young girls aspired to the true religious life, not to one despoiled of its most powerful attractions, namely, poverty, silence, and humility. It was not long before they began to consider how they should extricate themselves from their undesirable position, and remove the obstacles that barred them from the interior life. Divine Providence soon came to their aid, and our convent of Metz opened its doors to Josephine. The fervor of her first years in religion, was great. Though still young, she was made Mistress of Novices. In that capacity she displayed her rare talent for training souls, and the Community soon discovered what a treasure of wisdom and goodness it had in her.

There were in our city some pious persons living in community. They were anxious to join an Order approved by the Church. Mgr. Jauffret, Bishop of Metz, applied to the Bishop of Geneva and Lausanne, to obtain a foundation of the religious of the Visitation. He petitioned that Sister Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan, whose well-known family name recalled undying reminiscences of honor and loyalty, should be among the religious sent for the new work. Our Sisters of Fribourg, ever ready to promote God's glory, made the sacrifice of its best members in response to the Bishop's appeal. After all preliminaries were satisfactorily settled, the little band of pioneers started September 6, 1817. It was composed of three Sisters: the Superioress, Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan; the Assistant, Sister Marie-Stanislas de Schalla, the deposed Superioress of Fribourg; and Sister Marie de Sales Chapuis, then but one year professed. When drawing

near to Metz, Canon Brusseau deputed by his Bishop to conduct the foundress, seemed a prey to great anxiety. This did not escape the penetrating eye of Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan. At last, the Canon broke silence, and acknowledged that, although the house destined for the Sisters was not encumbered by debt, yet it was minus the ordinary necessaries of life. Each day had to provide for itself. There was no revenue. Divine Providence was to be its only support. The event verified the Canon's words, for the Sisters found in their new abode the poverty and destitution of Bethlehem. Mother Marie-Thérèse's serenity was not clouded by the appalling announcement. She said: "I came for God alone, and in Him alone will I put my trust."

It was not long before the Sisters understood from painful experience that the Canon's words fell far short of the reality. No provisions, no funds to procure even the very necessaries of life—such was the condition in which they found themselves. Fasting was the order of the day, and Mother Marie-Thérèse made use of her authority to deprive herself of even the short allowance that fell to her share. The joy with which she did this revealed the elevation of her soul and the strength of her religious spirit. It was especially when she spoke of the benedictions bestowed upon new undertakings as the recompense for rigid privations, that her heart overflowed with consolation and her eloquence enchanted her daughters. Of all the trials that Sister Marie de Sales Chapuis had to support, that of seeing Mother Marie-Thérèse depriving herself was, undoubtedly, the most poignant. Sister Marie de Sales exercised at this time the office of Dispenser, and she felt that the care of Mother Marie-Thérèse's health devolved in a great mea-

sure on her. With unbounded devotedness, she seconded the efforts of her Superioress, who had retained for herself, also, the care of the novices. It was an arduous duty for one of her advanced age to instruct beginners in the ceremonial of the Office, in the Rules and observances of the Order. The forming of subjects is a task full of thorns at all times; but in this particular case the difficulties were multiplied. Among those that had petitioned for the foundation, some were the remnants of the "Great Revolution," and others were souls accustomed to the practice of piety in their own peculiar way. Each one had her own spirit, her own private devotions, her own characteristics. To cast these heterogeneous elements into the mould of dependence and simplicity as shaped by the Founders of the Visitation, was no trifling undertaking. True, all brought their contingent of good will; but age had become with them second nature more rebellious than the first. How acutely the sensitive soul of Mother Marie-Thérèse, habituated to the most delicate proceedings in all the various conjunctures of life, must have suffered in contact with ideas so little in harmony with her feelings! But no word fell from her lips that could betray her sufferings. The Saviour had marked her out for this mission, and she recoiled before no obstacle.

She was zealously pursuing her work of devotedness when a new trial, more severe than any that had preceded it, was added to her burden. The health of Sister Marie de Sales gave way under so many privations, especially that of her native air. Mother Marie-Thérèse felt it her duty to notify Superiors of the fact. Sister Marie de Sales was immediately recalled to Fribourg. With deep regret she bade adieu to our Community, and carried with her the lasting remembrance of the spiritual favors Almighty

God had showered upon her whilst with us. She was afterward often heard to say: "How good is the God of Metz!"—Her heart was full of loving gratitude toward Mother Marie-Thérèse, who had guided her first footsteps in the religious life, and with whom she had shared its clouds and sunshine, its sorrows and joys. "It was remarkable," she used to say, "to see united in one person so many natural and supernatural gifts, so much capacity and so profound humility, together with so great an interior spirit, which gave to her most ordinary actions immense merit before God." Mother Marie-Thérèse, in her turn, evinced for her former novice esteem bordering on veneration. Until her death, she had recourse to her counsel, and submitted to her the guidance of her soul as to one particularly enlightened in the ways of God. Did she have a presentiment at the time that the process of the Beatification of this humble servant of God was to be one day submitted to the Apostolic See, and that prodigies of all kinds were to manifest the power of her intercession?

Eight years had passed since the founding of the Visitation convent of Metz, at which date Thérèse, the subject of this memoir, crossed our threshold. Our poverty was not then so great, as our boarding-school of thirty or forty pupils afforded us a revenue to meet urgent needs, and we felt that better days were in store for us. The young aspirant was presented to the Community by Mother Marie-Thérèse as a precious subject for the rank of lay-sister. She was, indeed, gladly received, but no one guessed the ineffable goodness of God in bestowing upon us this gift. Thérèse was happy to be again under the same roof with her friend, Mlle. Justine Gaudré, who was now a professed religious under the name

of Sister Marie-Xavier. From the moment of her arrival, Sister Marie-Xavier had been a subject of edification to Thérèse, as she had long been to the whole community. Her fidelity to the smallest observances, her simple obedience, the ardor of her love of God, in a word, all her actions revealed the consummate perfection of her soul. There was nothing sufficiently abject, sufficiently humiliating, to appease her thirst for suffering. This world was for her a place of exile, and her greatest dread sprang from the thought that, perhaps, she was destined to live a long life. Almighty God was touched by her vehement desires to be united to Him eternally. On the day of her holy profession, whilst she was prostrate under the pall, He gave her a presentiment of her approaching dissolution. An interior voice warned her to hasten the completion of her crown as but little time remained to her here below. Her health, in fact, soon gave way, and nothing could arrest the progress of her disease. Her angelic appearance, her example, her words, all recalled in a striking manner the last days of St. Aloysius Gonzaga. The night before her death, she begged the Sister in attendance to sing a canticle on the joys of heaven. Twice before expiring, she raised her eyes, so full of love and sweetness, toward the home of the blessed, and then went to join the choir of virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. She was only twenty-three years old, and counted but four months of religious profession. Beautiful lily of resplendent whiteness! She had charmed the Heart of Jesus, she was worthy to be presented to Him as our first flower. An indefinable sense of consolation mingled with Thérèse's sorrow. She had lost a model on earth, but she had gained a protectress in heaven.

Thérèse was sent as aid to the kitchen, and there she passed three years. Happy to spend herself for God, and to consecrate to His service all her leisure moments, her aspirations were limited to this. She loved her liberty, but to make a complete sacrifice of it, she only awaited the divine impulse, which had never failed her in any important action of her life. But that hour, she felt, had not yet come. Did she desire it? Did she silence in her heart the noise of those little passions that might prevent her hearing it? She herself, with that ingenuousness so characteristic of her, tells us that a secret attachment had imperceptibly glided into her heart, namely, an inordinate love of cleanliness. Every thing in her use was stamped with the seal of excessive neatness. Her linen of snowy whiteness was without crease or soil; and because the purity of her soul failed not to detect this fault, self-love stepped in with plausible excuses for her vanity, the chains of which were daily drawing closer. The still, small, but importunate, voice of conscience, spoke freely enough, but Thérèse lent not a willing ear.

Our Lord, though permitting her to feel her own weakness, was preparing for her a high degree of His holy love. He willed that the worthlessness of the obstacles which she opposed to His graces, should serve forever as a salutary counterpoise to the signal favors with which He intended to honor her, and that her humility should be strengthened against the perils of vain-glory.

Abbé Louyot, Thérèse's director, quickly discovered under her modest exterior the hidden fetters that shackled her soul. He knew how by energetic means to break her chains. Inclosure not yet established, the Reverend Father entered the convent for daily Mass. Happening one day to meet Thérèse, he accosted her with: "My

child, why do you wear caps so fine? Would not simpler ones be more suitable?"—His words were accompanied by a scrutinizing look from which Thérèse shrank. With downcast eyes, she answered with so much warmth that she betrayed the feelings of her heart: "Father, I wear these caps because they are all that I have, and I think it would put the house to useless expense to buy others."—The priest smiled, but said nothing. Next day, Mother Marie-Thérèse sent for the young postulant, and said to her: "My child, you hesitate to impose on the house the expense of new caps. Here take these. They will cost nothing."—They were old fashioned "*bonnets à le Reine*," the forgotten property of some former postulant. "Alas," said Thérèse in after years, "how well they were remembered for me! Never, never shall I forget my consternation when I saw my fresh, round face buried under the borders of those frightful caps. Shame forced me to guard my eyes, and my most strenuous efforts could not restrain the tears that fell freely from them. But my trial was not at an end. Once again, our Mother sent for me, and, in a most compassionate tone, said: 'Poor child! you must be chilled with cold! Your clothing is so light.'—I trembled. I felt instinctively that this apparent kindness concealed some snare for my self-love. I began warmly to protest that I did not suffer in the least from cold. But all in vain. My words were unheeded, and instead of my own nice, neat clothes, they gave others whose out-of-date style vied with their coarseness." Wounded to the quick on finding herself dressed like a beggar, Thérèse allowed several days to glide by before accepting the humiliation with good heart. At last, grace gained the ascendancy. She made the sacrifice of

her own neat trousseau, and found that all her late troubles vanished under the triumph gained over nature.

There was still one object, however, that had escaped the plot laid for her vanity. It was a small mirror carefully concealed from every eye. But the eye of God penetrated further than that of her vigilant Mistress, and His voice soon made itself heard in condemnation of the superfluous article. Vain was poor Thérèse's daily prayer: "My Jesus, allow me to keep this mirror one day more. I promise it shall be the last."—The next day, which was to be the last, always found her still weak and irresolute. Her courage faltered at the bare idea of passing the whole day with her cap awry, and so she stealthily consulted the hidden mirror. Remorse, however, began to disturb her conscience. During prayer, she constantly heard the words: "Thy mirror! Thy mirror!"—She could stand it no longer. The hour of grace had come and, with a vigorous fling, she hurled the forbidden object from a window to the street, not without danger of accident to some luckless passer-by. Vanity expelled from its last lurking-place, the love of God now asserted its empire over her soul.

CHAPTER VI.

Therese is Admitted to the Novitiate.

It was after the trials enumerated in the foregoing chapter that Thérèse was permitted to make what is called in convent parlance "her petition." This consists in a formal request on the part of the postulant to be allowed to begin the exercises of the novitiate. The favor was granted her, and we now find Thérèse earnestly beginning the study of the religious life in all its minutiae. The principal instrument in the work of her perfection at this time was Sister Marie-Louise de Sales de Condé, Mistress of Novices. It may interest our readers to give a rapid sketch of a life that contributed so greatly to the glory of God.

Sister Marie-Louise de Sales was born in 1792, at Deux-Ponts, whither her parents had removed. She passed through all the vicissitudes of the Revolution, her life often in danger. The revolutionary troubles over, M. de Condé and family returned to Paris. Amélie and her sisters were placed in a celebrated secular boarding-school, in which the most famous professors of the Capital gave instruction in the different branches of its curriculum. Religion alone was excluded. It was in this atmosphere of complete indifference, that Almighty God spoke to the heart of the innocent child, and sowed in it the germ of a religious vocation. The death of her mother and the prolonged absence of her father, rendered it necessary for the young sisters to leave Paris

for the time being ; and so, they went to make their home with their grandfather. It was during this sojourn that the call of the Good Master was distinctly heard by Amélie. St. Francis de Sales, the saint of her heart, sweetly attracted her to his little Institute. The desire to relieve the suffering members of Jesus Christ, however, was a still more powerful magnet to draw her elsewhere. After gaining her father's consent, she entered the novitiate of St. Charles, at Verdun, where one of her aunts had been a religious for many years. Amélie at once became a model of generosity and regularity ; and though scarcely twenty-five years old, she was named Superioress of the Hospital of St. Hippolyte. The turmoil of everyday life increased in proportion as her attraction for the interior life developed, and she could not help casting a look of holy envy at the peaceful and recollected lot of the daughters of St. Francis de Sales. How little she thought that the Divine Master was Himself preparing her way to the humble Visitation ! We cannot follow the painful trials that encompassed her before she found herself in possession of the coveted happiness. Suffice to say, that at the age of thirty-two she saw the novitiate open to receive her. Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan who, at that period, held the offices of Superioress and Mistress of Novices, met her with all the kindness of her maternal heart. Her keen penetration was quick to discover that God had placed under her guidance one of those courageous souls of whom St. Francis de Sales speaks. To strengthen her solid and well-tried virtue, the prudent Mistress treated her as a beginner in the spiritual life, and lost no opportunity to perfect her in humility. Sister Louise de Condé lovingly embraced humiliations. She profited by them to efface self, and to live under the eye

of God in the painful way of abnegation. Providence, who had destined her for heroic things, had admirably endowed her for her sphere in life. All was noble in her nature: mind, heart, education. A rapid flight elevated her to a high degree of virtue. The strength of her faith was remarkable. Her confidence increased with increasing difficulties. Never was she more invulnerable than when bereft of all human support, while her coolness amidst the most violent tempests could not be surpassed. "Mother de Condé," said a holy Bishop, "possesses a most uncommon soul. She has, indeed, one of those hearts that beat in the breast of saints."

Nothing could be more maternal than her conduct in the forming of souls entrusted to her by Almighty God. Weak souls she attracted by the affability of her manners, the sweetness of her words, and the tender demonstrations of her affection for them. The first difficulties of the spiritual warfare conquered, she excelled in inspiring them with the desire of a solid and powerful perfection, and a generous yearning to embrace what they most dreaded. She presented virtue to them under the most attractive colors. She encouraged their efforts, stimulated their good will by her own example, as she was always foremost in performing acts most repugnant to nature. In struggles inseparable from the acquisition of sanctity, her eye was ever upon the poor heart, the theatre of the conflict; and, with the most tender solicitude, she supported the combatant. She enlightened by her words of faith all who accepted them, and operated in their soul a salutary change. It would have been difficult, according to the testimony of the Sisters who had been the objects of her care, to imagine to one's self a more accomplished type of a Directress, so much was

her spirit in accord with that of our sweet and gentle Founder. But how shall we reconcile such statements with the vigorous attacks she made on nature when seeking to harmonize it with grace? Nothing more simple. With respect to souls destined to a high degree of supernatural love, does not God Himself depart from His established laws? And should not the hand chosen by Him to carry out His plans in the conduct of souls receive from Him alone the impulse to do so? To be guilty of timidity in such cases, would be to betray His dearest interests.

With that penetration with which she was gifted, Mother Marie-Louise de Sales soon discovered the rich treasures of grace in Thérèse. The more precious the materials to be employed in the construction of the sanctuary, the deeper should be the foundation, in order to secure its solidity. Convinced that attachment to self-will is one of the most formidable obstacles to the divine operation, the skilful Mistress pursued it unrelentingly. She endeavored by every means to display in full light the defective side of Thérèse's remarkable qualities. The moment that her natural inclinations became perceptible, was the moment for their solemn condemnation. The following incident will serve to illustrate this point. The excessive neatness that had so firm a hold upon our young postulant, was not restricted to her person; it extended to every thing in her use, especially to the humble cell assigned her by obedience. Every article in it was always in its proper place. Its whole appearance, so fresh and neat, revealed a spirit of order too minute not to betoken an attachment to be warred against before being crushed. One day about noon, Thérèse was sent to her little palace. To her astonishment, she beheld piled in

disorder stool, table, bedding, linen, pictures, etc., etc., in a word, all that it contained, and which she had so carefully arranged before leaving it that morning. Filled with consternation, off she ran to tell her Mistress of the scene of confusion that her cell presented. She ended her story with the words: "You would imagine that preparations were made for a bonfire."—Sister Marie-Louise de Sales replied very coolly: "Would it not be well to make a bonfire of all attachments unworthy a soul aspiring to consecrate herself to Almighty God?"

This trial was but a prelude to new tests of her virtue, destined to bend her will and school her in the science of abnegation. The time soon came when poor Thérèse knew not even where to find her cell. Worn out with fatigue, she would make her way to the one assigned her, but only to find it minus a bed. Where was it? To whom should she have recourse in her perplexity, her Mistress being at Matins? The Office over, she would, without the least manifestation of feeling, humbly make known her quandary, and patiently retire to the place pointed out to her as proper for her to pass the night. Sometimes it would be in one of the most frequented corridors or, again, in an obscure corner where horrible spiders had woven their webs. Poor Thérèse! This was a bitter trial. But what sweetened it for the young neophyte? She thought of the words of her Divine Master: "The Son of Man hath not whereon to lay His head," and her repugnance vanished. Twenty-four times in three months was she called upon to renew this act of resignation.

The mortification of the senses brought its own contingent of sacrifice. Habituated to restrict her diet to bare necessity, she contented herself with the coarsest

food. She dreamed not that she could exceed the limits of such mortification, when her Mistress opened to her a more extended field for generosity. "Community life is the tomb of self-love," says a great saint. For Thérèse it became the tomb of natural repugnances. The example of her Mistress, whose energetic character knew no hesitancy when there was question of sacrifice, together with the masculine vigor of her teaching, succeeded in conquering Thérèse's natural delicacy, so that should a stray fly light on her plate, or even, perchance, a spider, she no longer recoiled in horror; and a worm found in the fruit, roused no sentiment of disgust. These mortifications, however, affected the senses only, and the victory was too easily won for Thérèse's ardent soul. Almighty God soon visited her, therefore, with a complication of extraordinary pains. This necessitated a very careful diet, and against this subjection her proud and independent nature rebelled. The doctor ordered her to take substantial food in small quantities whenever she felt symptoms of the violent pains in the stomach from which she suffered. This prescription was keenly resented by her self-love, but we shall see how greatly it contributed to her advancement in abnegation. Her liberty was another point to be energetically attacked and as energetically defended. To have come to religion to serve in the humble rank of lay-sister, was quite in accord with her aspiration; but to be waited upon by others and those others her superiors, excited her most lively repugnance. This too human side of her character offered Thérèse innumerable opportunities for self-renunciation. Her frequent indisposition necessitated the carrying of her meals to the novitiate. There, to the poor child's great annoyance, her Mistress used to remain standing by her

side during the repast. Again, it was her little room that was to her a new cause of renunciation. A charitable hand would set things in order, and often in such a way as to make her smile through her tears. Hemorrhages sometimes obliged her to remain a part of the day in bed, and, at such times, her Mistress constituted herself her infirmarian. On one occasion, she said to Thérèse, pointing to the door: "Sister, you are not to cross that sill." Returning some time after from the Office, she found the invalid up, and the room in perfect order. In a tone half-sad, half-severe, she exclaimed: "My child, did you misunderstand me when I forbade you to leave the room?"—"O Sister, pardon me! I understood you perfectly. You forbade me to cross the sill, so I went out by the window."

Thérèse was fruitful in expedients. She knew well how to extricate herself from embarrassing circumstances. Her Mistress, knowing her indefatigable activity, said to her on one of their recreation days: "Sister, if you wish your share of the luncheon, you must come promptly to the novitiate at the hour for it, otherwise, you will have to be satisfied with dry bread." The advice was lost on Thérèse who, as usual, came too late. "Sister," inquired the Mistress as she handed her a piece of bread, "would you like anything else? If so, you may go and pick some cherries from that tree."—The tree designated was far beyond the young novice's reach. But Thérèse was not one to be daunted by such a difficulty. Seizing the favorable moment to effect her escape unperceived, she got a ladder, and in a few minutes, the novices to their utter astonishment, beheld their companion seated in the cherry-tree and availing herself to the letter of the permission just granted.

The maxims of St. Francis de Sales were very dear to Thérèse. Their beauty and simplicity charmed her mind and nourished her soul. One of them, which she most happily embodied in her own conduct was: "Yes, my daughter, I say to you rejoice as much as you can in doing good; for it is a double grace to do good works, and to do them well and cheerfully."—Joy was habitual to her. It welled up from her depths of grace, from her intimate communications with God, from her clear view of His loving kindness in her regard, and, above all, from her desire to refuse nothing to His love. This disposition, by the liberty of spirit that it secured to her, made every duty easy.

Thérèse was endowed by nature with remarkable aptitude for duty. Intelligent and active, she played with difficulties, no matter how great, for they always proved less than her courage. Daily contradictions served only to stimulate her fervor without troubling the habitual serenity of her soul. Her Mistress, on her side, excelled in all that was necessary for the good order of the convent. She could organize, undertake, and carry to completion in a most admirable manner whatever work might present itself. Her perfect practice of what she preached gave an irresistible authority to her words. Under her vigilant eye, Thérèse pursued her humble functions. The small number of domestic Sisters at this period rendered her duties very onerous. The day did not suffice for them sometimes, and she was necessitated to take from her hours of sleep, rising at three o'clock even during an intensely cold winter.

One night, when the whole house was at rest, Thérèse went alone to the cellar, to see to the fire. She lost her footing and fell from the top of a ladder. There for hours

she lay unconscious in the cold and damp. When returned to consciousness, she found that she had received a severe wound, and it was only with intense pain that she was able to drag herself back to the kitchen. Her state became so distressing that she was forced to apply to the Infirmarian for a remedy. The latter immediately sent for the doctor who, after examining the wound, said in an indifferent tone: "This young girl will never be able to work again."—Thérèse fully understood the drift of his words, but she was quite undisturbed by them. No sensible attraction had determined her to embrace the religious life, and, consequently, she felt no desire to pursue her undertaking contrary to the declared will of Almighty God.

On the fifteenth of October, her patronal feast, Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan took the Community, by way of a little recreation, to visit the new buildings then in course of construction. Thérèse, unable to follow, dragged herself to the choir, and there, prostrate before the Most Holy Sacrament, gave free vent to her tears. The thought of being in the hands of a physician was a bitter one to her, and almost made her tremble. She implored Our Lord, through the intercession of her holy patroness, to lay upon her that Divine Hand whose touch alone could cure all maladies. No sooner was her prayer of faith uttered than it was granted; pain vanished, and the power to move freely was restored to her whole person. She was still absorbed in thanksgiving when her Mistress came to help her to join the the Community. "I am cured!" exclaimed Thérèse, and to prove the truth of her assertion, she started off at such a pace that her Mistress could not keep up with her. Relieved of her painful anxiety, she pondered in her heart and with

feelings of deep gratitude the mercies of the Lord in her regard. Her restoration to health made her resolve more firmly than ever to serve God in strict dependence on His divine good pleasure. To rise above self, to draw near to God by purity of heart, to attach herself to Him alone, should hereafter be the one object of her desires. Prayer, the wonderful power of which she had so lately tested, should be her strength. Thus would she prepare for the sublime mission held in reserve for her, and of which she had at this period but a vague presentiment.

CHAPTER VII.

Therese's Reception and her Profession.

The time for clothing the young postulant with the religious habit was drawing nigh, and several fruitless attempts were made to gain M. Putigny's consent to his daughter's taking the step. The good man had returned to the practice of his Christian duties, and it was to this circumstance that Thérèse owed his permission to enter the convent. But his increasing infirmities and the loneliness of his life, filled him with deep regret at her absence. Grace, however, touched his heart, and he yielded to oft-repeated sollicitations. The reception ceremony took place on the 8th of December, 1828, and we shall henceforth know Thérèse as Sister Marie-Catherine.

Her three brothers witnessed the ceremony; and so intense was their affliction upon the loss of their sister that, during the whole time, their smothered sighs were audible. Mother Marie-Thérèse invited them to breakfast,

at which she allowed Sister Marie-Catherine to serve. Great hopes were entertained for their spiritual welfare, on account of the influence of their sister over them, but all her efforts failed. The sorrow they felt at her loss was too deep for comfort. The eldest brother maintained a gloomy silence during the whole meal. He uttered not a single word. When taking leave, he broke his cane to pieces, threw the fragments out of the window into the garden, and swore never to be found again in the precincts of our convent. A premature death, unhappily, sealed his resolve. His son a fervent Catholic and the excellent father of a family, is today a resident of Versailles. Until the death of his aunt, he ever manifested for her the warmest affection. Her other brothers edified her by their faith in Divine Providence. One of them made her a visit, during which he told her of the great damage done to his village and the crops by hailstorms. Sister Marie-Catherine offered him some human consolation, thinking thus to pave the way for the spiritual benefit that he might draw from resignation to the holy will of God, who orders all events for the good of them that love Him. "What!" exclaimed her brother with faith worthy of the early Christians, "Does not God conduct all things wisely? Is it for us to judge what is best?"—"The rôles had changed," said Sister Marie-Catherine. "It was my brother exhorting me to perfect submission to God's holy will, despite its apparent severity."—The visits of her family to her gradually diminished, on account of the advanced age of some of its members. The difficulty of communication, and the customs of country-people, brought about toward the close of her life almost complete separation from all near and dear to her. But viewing it in the light

of God, she gratefully remarked: "Almighty God has bereft me of all natural joy. He wishes to be Himself all to me. May He be for ever blessed!"

The first religious consecration of Sister Marie-Catherine, namely, her reception of the religious habit, was stamped with the seal of the Cross; but the rays from that Cross penetrated to the depths of M. Putigny's heart and carried with them faith, repentance, and conversion. Simultaneously with the clothing of his child in the robe of the spouse of the Lamb, this good father was struck by apoplexy more terrible than death. For an entire year, it bound him to a bed of pain. So completely was his former prejudice against the ministers of religion overcome that, at the first attack he made his confession, after which he was not satisfied to pass a night without receiving his pastor's blessing. His zeal turned him into an apostle, and he labored so earnestly and effectually that he succeeded in bringing many of his old military friends back to the practice of their religious duties. Despite the state of suffering to which he was reduced, no complaint ever fell from his lips. "God will never allow me to suffer as much as I deserve," he would say to those that compassionated him. "I have sinned much. It is just that I should expiate my sins."—One year later, at the time of his daughter's Profession, a second attack ended his mortal career. Sister Marie-Catherine's term of probation passed in pretty much the same routine of duties as did her postulanship, though they were frequently interrupted by sickness and hemorrhages. Endowed with uncommon energy, she often resumed her duties when all thought her at the point of death. Her interior struggles became more violent as the time for her Profession drew near. The only relief she found in her temptations and

difficulties, was to kiss her holy Rules and press them to her heart. "Believe me," she would say, "no one knows what strength and consolation I derive from this practice. Knowing that the Chapter would decide in my favor, I prostrated myself before God, and implored Him to inspire the Sisters to refuse me their suffrages. When I was told of the result of the Chapter and that I was to make my vows, my grief found vent in irrepressible tears."

This feeling of repugnance, which was renewed with great intensity as the time approached for her final vows, was evidently the work of the spirit of darkness. Almighty God, who called her to a very elevated degree of divine love, permitted that she should be purified by this aversion, nay, even by disgust itself for every duty of her holy vocation, duties which she was afterward to love devotedly when bound to Him by the triple cord of her vows.

December 13, 1829, the anniversary of the death of the Holy Foundress, St. Jane de Chantal, Sister Marie-Catherine had the happiness to consummate irrevocably her engagements to God by pronouncing her holy vows.

A sister novice whose family held a high social position, attracted to our humble chapel the élite of the city. Sister Marie-Catherine's vows secured her from the attacks of the devil, and all his machinations were frustrated; for from this moment she recovered her liberty of spirit, her joy of heart, and she ran on with fervor in the thorny path of perfection. God now took such possession of her soul that nothing could distract her from His holy presence. Merely to turn her thoughts toward Him, was sufficient to plunge her in recollection so profound that

the things of this world seemed to disappear from her view.

A few months passed, during which the happy spouse of Christ tasted in silence and obscurity the peace she had acquired at the cost of great interior strife, when the Revolution of July, 1830, broke out.

During these days of trouble and religious disturbance, our convent was marked out for pillage. The frenzied populace, uttering seditious cries, shook the doors of the cloister with reedoubled blows. The convent was surrounded on all sides and the Community, taking refuge in the choir, sought to mitigate the anger of God by their prayers and acts of confidence. Sister Marie-Catherine was at the time alone and at the very opposite end of the convent, confined to her bed by suffering. From her cell near the entrance door, she could distinctly hear the vociferations and menaces of the rabble, whose number was every moment increasing. What should she do? What would become of her, alone and abandoned? The bare idea of falling into the hands of the frantic mob, made her tremble with fear. Almighty God came to her aid, and inspired her to make one of those acts of abandonment of which the saints have the secret. Fancying things at their very worst, she accepted all that the permissive will of God should send, and, casting herself into His paternal arms, she regained her peace and serenity of soul. Scarcely was the act consummated, when God gave her the assurance of her preservation. A large body of troops appeared on the scene to scatter the rabble, and order was soon restored.

In speaking of this episode of her life, Sister Marie-Catherine used to refer to that act of confidence, made

under such anxiety, as a signal grace fruitful in happy results. "There is nothing," she remarked, "so calculated to render us invincible and to strengthen us in good as such acts of immolation. They surpass the power of nature, and oblige the soul to cast itself on God by a supreme act of abandonment. They who make such an act can testify to the truth of these words. *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion: he shall not be moved forever that dwelleth in Jerusalem.*" (Ps. cxxix. 6.)

CHAPTER VIII.

Sister Marie-Catherine's Habitual View of Our Lord's Sacred Humanity.

Even before the age of reason, Almighty God had required of Sister Marie-Catherine an almost instinctive submission to His will. It was a power from which she had no desire to withdraw. Any effort to do so, would have troubled the serenity of her soul, and awakened remorse. With advancing years, however, self-will strengthened. By nature she was richly endowed with great energy and an excessive love of liberty. It was not, then, without a long and obstinate resistance that grace rose victorious.

The Community had had ample time to form a judgment of the merit of the young professed. Her intelligence rendered her in their eyes superior to her station, and eminently qualified for the exercises of the interior life. It was evident that she possessed a superabundance of natural sap, which the Heavenly Gardener might, by

diminishing, utilize to His profit. Nothing in her conduct seemed to raise her above the ordinary level of the religious life, if we except the interior voice that so strongly impelled her to good, and which was known only to those to whom God had intrusted her soul. Our Lord was, nevertheless, about to favor her with one of those choice graces granted only to a few privileged souls. One day, whilst she was praying in the tribune, she thought that she perceived a shadow on the opposite wall, thrown apparently from a person at her side. She took no notice of it, but went on with her prayer. After some time, she arose and, to her utter amazement, beheld standing near her the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ. From that moment, His presence was as inseparable from her as the shadow from the substance. When speaking of this favor, she said: "I often see the Sacred Humanity in a kind of semi-obscurity, as one sees a beloved friend sometimes, rather in a general view than in detail. At times, He appears to be surrounded by a soft light, which facilitates my contemplation of His Adorable Face, which always bears the same features, although the expression changes according to the different scenes of His life unfolded to my gaze. His bearing, His gestures, His step, all breathe incomparable dignity and nobility. O what majesty!"—When she glanced at pictures or statues of Our Lord, she often exclaimed: "Ah! that is not You, my good Jesus. How can they represent You in such a way, You who are so beautiful?"—A friend of our convent had made us a present of a very handsome statue of the Sacred Heart, and we were expressing to her our admiration of the Divine Countenance, whose look seemed to rest lovingly upon all. Sister Marie-Catherine kept a modest silence. At last, being pressed to say what she

thought about it, she said: "The expression is a little like Him,"—then covering her face with her hand, as if to shut out every other sight, she said: "But it is not Jesus. O it is very different from Him!"

This view of Our Lord was never absent from her night or day. At times, fearful of illusions, she made strenuous efforts to divert her mind from the Divine Presence, but in vain. Our Lord, seeing her sufferings, deigned to reassure her of the reality of a favor too exceptional not to alarm her humility. "It is I, fear not," He said. The words fell upon her like a ray of light, and filled her soul with certitude that no power could shake. Walking always with her Saviour, speaking and acting uninterruptedly in the ineffable light of His holy presence, her highly privileged soul appeared to enjoy in anticipation a beam of the light of glory, and its reflection illumined her whole life. We may readily conceive the exquisite delicacy of conscience arising from such a grace. A simple look at Jesus showed her, as in a mirror of infinite sanctity, whatever in her own conduct could displease that Divine Master. The slightest imperfection in thought, word, or action, was shown her, and the most trivial frailties of humanity appeared in this light as so many stains on a white garment. We do not pretend to say that Sister Marie-Catherine was without faults. Like every child of Adam, she bore in the depths of her being tendencies opposed to the law of the spirit. Human passions made themselves felt, but they never obscured her reason. In the presence of the Divine Model ever before her eyes, they quickly disappeared. Such exhalations of human infirmity could not be exposed to the rays of Divine Justice without melting away, like morning mists, under their beneficent influence.

Under the direct and permanent action of such a grace, Sister Marie-Catherine blindly followed its impulse. The way she had to tread, the trials she had to meet, were now but secondary considerations to her. Having, in the fullest acceptance of the word, abandoned herself into the hands of God, knowing, too, that the gift of her own will is the most glorious homage that the creature can render to the Creator, she was happy in surrendering herself even with a sort of temerity to the unknown designs of His love. So perfectly did she do this that she could find no words to express it. It was the absolute possession of her entire being by the Holy Spirit.

The whole attention of her mind was now given to discern the will of God, and the whole bent of her inclination was to follow it. Time, place, circumstances had no effect upon her first determination. In the midst of bitter trials, we could hear her say to God with heavenly calmness: "Dost Thou think to contradict me, my God? Ah! well, it is just the contrary. Thy will is all that I love in this world. To know it and to accomplish it, form my only happiness."—To succeed or to fail, to see obstacles multiplying along her path, or to follow with a glance the sweet hand of Providence smoothing them away, to find herself overwhelmed by labor, to be in joy or sorrow, to be esteemed, or to taste in silence the inconstancy of the creature,—all was accepted as soon as faith discovered to her the seal of the Beloved.

Almighty God does not ordinarily grant such favors as a recompense. They generally enter into His divine plan as a sort of initiation to a more exalted vocation and, at the same time, as an efficacious means of perfection. We can hardly conceive the marks of tenderness that Jesus Christ lavishes on certain souls whom He calls to

perfect union with Himself. When allowed to penetrate the inmost sanctuary of such intrepid souls, we are entranced on beholding with what commingling of strength and sweetness the Holy Spirit pursues the work of their perfection. The constant view of the Adorable Face, which constitutes the bliss of the elect, enkindled in the soul of Sister Marie-Catherine a longing to conform her whole life to that of Jesus suffering. The more His love increased in her heart, the more ardent became her thirst for immolation, and this so closely united her to her Saviour as to make her, in a manner, one with Him by intense compassion. The number and infinite value of His divine expiations, the ineffable goodness with which He offered them for all mankind, and the contempt cast upon them by the malice and indifference of many, were powerful incentives to prayer for the gaining of souls to Jesus Christ.

Although the extraordinary graces of which she was the object, daily proved their supernatural origin, her Superioress, nevertheless, felt obliged to test the truth of the spirit that led her on the way of perfection. We know that whatever deviates from the common life, is justly suspected in the Visitation, whose seal is perfect simplicity. In order, then, to test whether Sister Marie-Catherine's great attraction to union came from God or from the spirit of darkness, her Superioress so multiplied her duties that she was often obliged to deprive herself of prayer or to make it while attending to them. "The oftener I am obliged to give up Our Lord for the love of Our Lord, the more He seems to pursue me and load me with His divine favors. If it depended on myself, I should try never to have more leisure to devote to Him, for to sacrifice myself for love of Him, is my soul's

ambition.”—One day, however, she found herself in great straits. The bell rang for a sermon, at which all the Sisters had been notified to be present. “What shall I do?” said Sister Marie-Catherine to herself. “If I leave the Sister’s supper on the range so long, it will not be fit to put on the table.”—In her perplexity, she turned to her ordinary resource, the Immaculate Mother of God. On her knees before her statue, she distinctly heard these words: “Go, and practise what I am going to teach your Sisters.” Sister Marie-Catherine, radiant with joy, quietly returned to her office of Martha. Despite her attraction for the word of God, she was almost always deprived of extraordinary sermons; but from this moment, the occasion of sacrifice inebriated her with consolation. “What can the preacher say,” she thought, “that our dear Lord cannot speak here to my heart?”—Thus it was that she saw God in all things and everywhere. Receiving much, she longed to give much. Her body she delivered up to servitude and fatigue often voluntary, and her heart she immolated by the retrenchment of human joys even the most legitimate. She had an insatiable desire to deny herself everything that could afford human satisfaction, and she went so far as to deprive herself of even spiritual consolations, though so much appreciated. She found in the heart-to-heart communication with which Jesus Christ deigned to honor her, a foretaste of heavenly delights and the courage to surmount all difficulties.

CHAPTER IX.

Sister Marie-Catherine Infirmarian at the Academy.

In 1832, the cholera raged at Metz. After spreading through many quarters of the city, it broke out in our Community. Eleven of our members were stricken down at once by the terrible scourge. Sister Marie de Sales de Condé went assiduously from bed to bed wherever her services were needed, lavishing upon every sufferer the treasures of sympathy stored in her kind heart. The Community, knowing her intrinsic worth by her wise direction of the novices, shortly after the cessation of the epidemic, confided to her the charge of Superioress.

Sister Marie-Catherine joyfully placed herself under the firm, but sweet, guidance of her early teacher in the religious life. A strong bond attached her to the new Mother, that of conformity of attraction for the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ. Both had been favored from On High with that powerful touch of grace which rivets the heart to its treasure. Sister Marie-Catherine, not as yet habituated to the continual presence of her Divine Saviour, felt the need of pouring into the soul of her spiritual Mother the superabundance of joy with which her own was overflowing, and of learning from her experience the wise reserve recommended under such circumstances: "It is well to keep the secret of the King."

A mission more important than that of the kitchen was now assigned her. Almighty God, to further His own designs, made use of an increase of sufferings. The heat of the kitchen fire became too much for her, so she was

withdrawn from her charge and placed at the boarding-school, where her life was made up of repeated acts of devotedness. If her new duties brought her some physical relief, it was not equally so with regard to her mental condition. Her solicitude was now to extend to multifarious duties, such as the wardrobe, the refectory, and the infirmary. Her unrelenting zeal, however, could cope with all. It was in the infirmary especially that her tact around the sick was exhibited, and she received from her Superioress most useful lessons in her new duties. No touch was so delicate as that of Mother Marie de Sales, no hand so gentle and skilful as hers. She had a thousand and one means to solace the sick without wearying them. In this, even when Superioress at the Hospital of St. Hyppolite, she bore the reputation of being perfect. Sister Marie-Catherine found plenty to do in her new post. Typhoid and brain fever had for many years made their appearance in our convent, notwithstanding every sanitary precaution. One day, while attending one of our patients of whose recovery the physician despaired, he drew her aside and, being a better practitioner than theologian, said to her: "Sister, your place is not here. You should be with the Sisters of Charity, where your rare talents for taking care of the sick could be utilized to greater advantage. Believe me. Go to the Hospital of Bon-Secours, where I shall obtain for you the care of a ward."—If all our physicians did not so openly express their opinion of her skill, they did not fail to manifest their surprise at it; consequently, they often eagerly awaited the result of her nursing in their critical cases.

We shall not be astonished at the supernatural efficacy that seemed to be attached to the remedies employed

by Sister Marie-Catherine, when we recall the lively faith with which they were administered. The Tabernacle was always for her Jesus living among us, in His power, in His goodness, in the irresistible cravings of His Heart to do us good. She approached Him as did the sick in the days of His mortal life, invoking the virtue that radiated from His Sacred Heart upon all the miseries around her, and which her tender charity rendered in some degree personal. When the sickness looked serious, she might be seen directing her steps toward the choir. Opening the door gently, she would kneel down reverently, lay at the feet of Jesus the medicine that had been ordered, and beg Our Lord to bless it. Full of confidence, she would then rise, bearing in her heart a hope, sometimes even a conviction, which was often speedily verified. Should the remedies prove ineffectual, her prayer became more pleading, more humble. Frequently an inspiration darted like lightning through her mind. She would follow it strictly, and her efforts in behalf of her patient met with success.

One of our pupils had been attacked by a serious malady. Leeches had been applied, and for two days Sister Marie-Catherine never left the child's bedside, her thumb pressing on the vein that had been, though to no effect, cauterized. The child had been given over by doctors, the breath of life was hardly perceptible. The blessed candle was already in her dying hand, and each respiration was looked upon as the last, when a sudden illumination from On High discovered to Sister Marie-Catherine the sure way of snatching the child from death. She made use of it, and health was restored.

The sacrifice of human wisdom was ordinarily the price of her success in such cases. The exceptional vigor of

her faith urged her to cling to the almighty power of the Most High, though human ideas were struggling hard for the mastery. Jesus responded to her call. He came to cure. But when He wished to use clay and spittle, her pride suffered. Death to self had not yet struck into the very depths of her soul, to bring forth blind submission and annihilation. Another of our pupils burned her foot frightfully. In a few days, it had become a shapeless mass of inflammation, and exhaled a fetid odor. The remedy was not long in presenting itself to Sister Marie-Catherine's mind; but it was so foreign to reason, that she dared not apply it. Meantime, the burn was gaining ground. Suddenly, remorse for her infidelity awoke in her soul, and she sprinkled the putrefied foot with a certain kind of flour that had been indicated to her. In an instant the acute pain ceased, and the sufferer fell into a refreshing sleep. Next morning the frightful sore bade fair for a perfect cure. Some excrescence alone remained, as if in attestation of the wonderful favor that God had granted.

Again, a case of prolonged sickness threatened to become malignant, and medical science seemed powerless to arrest it. With that faith which works miracles, Sister Marie-Catherine turned to God, and soon experienced the effects of the divine promise, "Whatsoever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." On another occasion, a pupil was stricken down by typhoid fever. The sickness made rapid progress, and the case roused intense anxiety. Sister Marie-Catherine so fervently invoked the aid of Almighty God that the Divine Heart yielded to her petitions. She asked the restoration of her patient through the hands of our Blessed Lady. Her prayer, the very breathing of the Holy Ghost, was

answered without delay. The Blessed Virgin, resplendent with beauty, appeared at the bedside of the sick child, and gave her the assurance of a perfect cure. The heavenly light that environed the Mother of God, was distinctly perceptible to the young pupil, and revealed to her the divine favor. She was so excited that her attendants could with difficulty calm her, or draw from her the secret of her emotion. She grew better from that moment.

Another of our pupils, also attacked by typhoid, was favored with a similar visit from Mary. She is now the mother of a family, but she has ever preserved the faithful remembrance of the miraculous interposition. The following is her account of it:

“When I was a boarder at the Visitation Academy of Metz, I had an attack of typhoid fever. I was then about fourteen years old. Along with the fever, I had complicated brain trouble. The most devoted care was lavished upon me by the Sisters, especially by Sister Marie-Catherine who, night and day, seemed entirely forgetful of her own fatigue. The malady made rapid progress, and soon took a very serious form. I had to be removed from the children’s infirmary, and thus I was deprived of Sister Marie-Catherine’s care, though she came to see me from time to time. Her visits infused into my soul calm and submission to God’s holy will. I never felt their effects more forcibly than when she was near me. Her mere presence quieted me, and I recognized her voice even in my delirium. I had the happiness to have her with me when I received Holy Viaticum, and her ardent charity inspired me to make the sacrifice of my life, which I did with all my heart. The sweet influence of my infirmarian penetrated me and, although

too weak to formulate a thought myself, I followed her saintly soul in her aspirations to Heaven. After the sublime ceremony, I saw my mother enter the room, her eyes swimming in tears. This was the last thing that I remembered. I can recall nothing except the certitude of my marvellous cure, which will ever remain in indelible characters on my memory.

“Sister Marie-Catherine remained alone at my pillow, praying fervently. Suddenly, I saw distinctly, and I still can see it in my mind, the figure of an angelic, smiling child, surrounded by a diaphanous vapor. It was the Infant Jesus and His Blessed Mother near me. I had at the same time the assurance of a divine, supernatural manifestation, and no fear disturbed my soul. What words did they utter? I know not. But the impression produced on me will never be effaced. Mary seemed to be conversing with Sister Marie-Catherine, whilst Jesus inebriated my heart with joy unspeakable. Too soon, alas! the heavenly vision vanished. I would have loved to die at that blessed hour, and Sister Marie-Catherine had some trouble to persuade me that God did not want me yet. She who had prevailed on me to make the sacrifice of my life, had now equal trouble to resign me to its prolongation. From that moment, she assured me of my cure, and shortly after my restoration was perfect.”

The triennial of Mother Marie-Louise de Sales was at an end. In her office of Superioress, she had been a model of those virtues that distinguish a mother according to the Heart of God. She had, besides, effected two works which, owing to their importance, would suffice to perpetuate her memory, namely, the erection of the boarding-school and the definite establishment of inclosure,

despite almost insurmountable obstacles. She was again intrusted with the care of the novices, her old labor of love. Our beloved Community of Amiens, having asked from us a Sister to fill the charge of Superioress, the answer was such as might be expected from a heart so generous as that of Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan. Notwithstanding her own delicate health and the great need she had of the assistance of Sister Marie de Sales, she made choice of that beloved and devoted daughter, that perfect model of a religious for the mission. Their separation was painful, but no one felt the loss more than Sister Marie-Catherine. Hidden in an obscure corner, she vainly endeavored to stifle her sighs. Death seemed to her less cruel than this separation, for God gave her to know that it would be unending in this life. Benefits of the most exalted order had established between these two souls confidential communications difficult to sever.

The heart of Sister Marie-Catherine, full of God, was necessarily full of divine love. Fashioned by the Holy Spirit in view of His designs, there could be found in her no self-seeking. She was a stranger to personal interest. Her every act revealed extraordinary nobility of sentiment and a tender compassion for her neighbor. From many instances of this, we shall give the following: Among the workmen employed on some buildings added to the convent, there was one whose wife, though seriously ill, was deprived of the comforts for which her state called. She was even in want of bedclothes. This distress roused Sister Marie-Catherine's pity, and she made known to her Superioress the needs of the poor family, begging to be allowed to give the sufferer a comforter belonging to one of the pupils. "Do you not know," said the Superioress, "that we have only the requisite number? There

is not one over.”—“O Mother,” the kind-hearted Sister quickly replied, “can we not rely on the Sacred Heart? Is it not powerful enough to return to us all that we give away?”—Conquered by this argument, Mother M. N.—granted the desired permission, and the alms was bestowed. But great was the astonishment of all concerned, when not a single bed was found that night, without its full complement of covers. When Almighty God speaks by one of those inspirations that exclude all doubt, He wishes to be obeyed regardless of difficulties or of those human judgments, which were fertile in pretexts for taxing Sister Marie-Catherine with imprudence or presumption. Time and again, The Almighty Master responded in wonderful ways to the faith of His servant.

In 1842, Sister Marie- Joséphine de Courten was elected Superioress of the Community. She belonged to a family of high birth and firm religious principles. An unwearied exactitude to the smallest duties, a methodical mind, a marked tact for organization, along with a great love for the hidden life, had up to this period distinguished her. But the new sphere into which she was now thrown called for the display of qualities and virtues until then kept in the shade, thus revealing to the Community her true value. They knew of her meekness and regularity, but they were ignorant of the just measure of firmness and zeal by which her other gifts were accompanied, and which were necessary to maintain the perfection of religious observance. From the very first, she gained all hearts by her devotedness and amiable disposition. Mother Marie Joséphine used her influence only to perfect her subjects in the interior life, which was the dominant attraction of her soul. To strengthen the reign of Jesus by closing all avenues to self-will, that

formidable antagonist of holiness, was the aim of this Mother; consequently, she was assiduous in furnishing her daughters with occasions for daily and hourly sacrifices, in order to establish their soul in spiritual pliancy, the most active agent of perfection. Need we say that she kept a vigilant eye on Sister Marie Catherine in the details of her daily duties, in order to eradicate every attachment to her own personal views?

Sister Marie-Catherine's vulnerable side was, as we have already seen, her inclination for extreme neatness, and the aiming at the highest perfection in every thing committed to her charge. She tried hard to overcome these natural inclinations by the practice of the contrary, though in a limited measure; but specious reasons were not wanting in favor of the former. Sometimes she would say: "To please God, is the only end that I have in view. Would I dare offer him actions unworthy His greatness?"—Or, again, "Should not the deep respect that I bear my Sisters show itself in even the smallest services that I render them?"—Mother Marie-Joséphine did not lose sight of the fact, that, however favored a soul may be, the demon of vanity knows well that soul's human weakness. She sought, therefore, to discover everywhere the ruses of the evil one. Sister Marie-Catherine felt no temptation to vanity arising from her special communications with Almighty God; but might she not almost unconsciously allow some sentiments of complacency to glide into her mind on account of her dexterity, her industry, her cleverness? One day, at a time when Sisters of her own rank were few in the convent, she had taken great pains in cleaning the pupil's dormitory. With sentiments of satisfaction, she was contemplating the result of her labor, when Mother Marie-Joséphine happened

to pass that way. Sister Marie-Catherine drew her attention to the nice, fresh look of the dormitory. "Sister," said Mother Marie-Joséphine gravely, "whilst you are admiring your work, the devil looks on laughing at your vanity."—Sometimes the voice of Our Lord sounded in her soul, when He wished to give her a salutary lesson. He could not endure the subterfuges that self-will occasionally brought to bear in matters of obedience. Neither her promptitude nor her want of reflection found favor in His eyes. One day, she failed in that simplicity that makes of obedience a sacrifice of sweet odor agreeable to God. She was suffering at the time, and the doctor had ordered leeches to be applied to her leg. Sister Marie-Catherine put them on her arm, perhaps to be able to attend more freely to her work. This fault drew upon her a severe reprimand from her Superioress, and a still more severe one on the part of Almighty God, who sternly addressed to her the following words: "Behold! the leeches will be more obedient than thou."—And so it happened. They instantly detached themselves from her arm, and went to her leg, to the great astonishment of the attendant.

It is said, and with truth, that obedience is the shortest road to perfection; and this because it is, perhaps, the most assured sign that the love of God possesses the soul. May we not say that obedience is the artery of the spiritual life? By its pulsation more than by the frequency and greatness of extraordinary graces, we can estimate progress in virtue. The saints were passionately enamored of this virtue. So exalted was their idea of the glory that it renders to God, that they desired all their actions to be, as it were, sealed with it, like those of Jesus, their Divine Model, who, in obedience to His Father, sacri-

ficed Himself to the death of the Cross. When no longer Superioress of the Community, Sister Marie-Joséphine held the office of infirmarian. Her duties brought her into direct and constant communication with Sister Marie-Catherine. The latter retaining, perhaps unconsciously, a too sensible attachment for her former Superioress, soon experienced the inexorable jealousy of Our Lord. She says: "It was the first day of our retreat. From the evening before, Sister Deposed" (such is the title of deposed Superioresses in the Visitation) "had not made her appearance in her office. I became anxious. 'Can she be sick?' I asked myself. I tried to banish the thought, but it followed me everywhere. I knew from its importunity that it was suggested by the evil one. To triumph over him, as well as over my own heart, I made the resolution to kiss the ground as often as it presented itself to my mind. Ah, how often I was obliged to pay the penalty! I think it must have been a hundred times. At last, evening drew on, and I ventured to ask our Mother concerning Sister Deposed's non-appearance. 'She is suffering,' replied Mother, 'from a severe headache. If she is not better by tomorrow, we must send for the doctor.'—Permission was given me to see her and judge for myself, but not till the next day. O how long that night! I thought it would never end. The doctor was summoned, but he found no cause for alarm. Now came my turn, and I entered the room of the dear sufferer. Hardly had my eyes rested on her countenance than Our Lord, one hand pointing to the invalid, said to me: 'Seest thou this creature whom thou lovest so much? She will soon be a corpse.'—In sorrow and consternation, I flew to Mother Marie-Joséphine, and implored her to have our dear Sister Deposed assisted for death without

delay. She tried to calm me, laughed at my fears, and attributed them to my great affection for the Sister. Nothing disconcerted, I continued my entreaties. I assured her that time pressed. At last, she yielded. The confessor was immediately sent for. He administered Extreme Unction, and applied the Indulgence *in articulo mortis* to our dying Sister, who shortly after breathed forth her soul into the hands of her Creator."

After such lessons from the mouth of Truth itself, how clearly the nothingness of all earthly things appeared to Sister Marie-Catherine! This death was a terrible shock to her. By it she lost one of her dearest supports. It was the two-edged sword, "*reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit*," discovering even the most hidden fibres, and tearing them out without pity. "O Lord," would she sometimes say, "Thou must love my soul very much to deal with it thus."—And to this cry of suffering, Our Lord would respond by a new death, a new separation, a new renunciation. He knew the heart of His servant, and His thoughts over her were thoughts of love.

CHAPTER X.

Sister Marie-Catherine, a Daily Communicant.

Almighty God, by calling her to the cloister, had raised a wall of separation between the world and Sister Marie-Catherine. Prayer and interior recollection kept her on the alert against the enemy of salvation. She possessed in a high degree that delicacy of conscience

which rules the movements of the heart, and that vigilance which foils the snares of Satan. Such dispositions naturally lead to daily Communion. But not so in Sister Marie-Catherine's case. Before her entrance into the convent, she was accustomed to approach the Holy Table on the principal feasts, though she did not experience that insatiable hunger which, at a later period, was to consume her. We were passing through a period in which even those most opposed to the discouraging doctrines of Jansenism, could not preserve themselves entirely from its practical influence. Frequentation of the Sacraments was rare. Sister Marie-Catherine was unable to escape entirely the glacial breath that was passing over souls. Deeply impressed by the thought of the purity required to participate at the Banquet of the Angels, she trembled at the idea of the least imperfection; and the fear that kept her at a distance, usurped in her soul the place of love. From her entrance into religion, however, this feeling began to diminish, and her soul, freed from excessive timidity, was eventually to yield to the loving invitation: "Come to Me!"

In the early days of the convent of Metz, as we have said elsewhere, the Community was small, and the burden of labor devolved on a few. The duties that fell to the lot of Sister Marie-Catherine rendered it very inconvenient for her to communicate on certain days. Father Layot, the confessor of the Sisters, expressed to her his great dissatisfaction at her losing Holy Communion. Better than any one else did he understand the great designs of Almighty God over this privileged soul, to second which Holy Communion was the means most efficacious. Many years, however, were to elapse before his penitent

would realize the cravings of his zeal on this point. At one time, having lost several Communions, Father Loyot said to her, "You find it impossible to communicate on the days of the Rule. Very well. I wish you to go right away, and ask Mother to allow you daily Communion."—This was a thunderbolt for poor Sister Marie-Catherine, but she obeyed, despite her great repugnance to ask such a favor. "You! Daily Communion!" exclaimed Mother Marie-Joséphine, giving her a look that cut her to the soul, and that she could scarcely support. "You, daily Communion? Ah! that requires reflection."

Before consenting to a request of so great moment from one only in the first stage of the religious life, Mother Marie-Joséphine felt it her duty to confer with the wise director. The result of the conference was, that Sister Marie-Catherine should daily ask permission to communicate. From this subjection she never dispensed herself, though she frequently met a refusal. These repeated denials grounded her solidly in the love of God's good pleasure, and preserved her from the wanderings of her imagination and the returns of self-love. Was Mother Marie-Joséphine conquered by the perseverance of the humble Sister, or had the time of probation reached its limits? Sometimes, under the influence of her old fears, Sister Marie-Catherine went to Holy Communion only in blind obedience. To Our Lord alone it belonged, to eradicate the last vestiges of her youthful impressions, and to substitute others in stricter conformity with His Sacred Heart. She tells us: "One day, when approaching the Holy Table, I besought Our Lord that, if the Communion I was about to make was not for His glory, to exert His power then and there to annihilate me. But

no sooner had I received Him than I heard Him say to me in tones of heavenly sweetness: 'Knowest thou not that it is love, not fear that I wish thee to have?'"

On another occasion, after a slight fault, her remorse made her resolve to abstain from the Bread of Life. In this way she thought to offer Almighty God an agreeable sacrifice of expiation. Wonderful to relate, at the moment of Holy Communion, she beheld two angels with lighted flambeaux directing their steps toward her. They invited her to follow them, accompanied her to the Holy Tabernacle, and reconducted her in the same way to her place.

When freed from every fetter, what a rapid flight love takes in a soul as pure as that of Sister Marie-Catherine! Vehement desires for the Eucharistic Food began now to consume her. Many of the Community can recall having seen this poor famished lover more than once gently opening the door of the Superioress's room, and humbly withdrawing after receiving a mortifying refusal. Days went by, but brought her no other bread than that of humiliation, bitter bread, which helped her, however, to accept the privation of the Bread of Life. It was very evident that Our Lord took the part of this fervent and humble Sister, by strongly biasing the will of the Superioress in her favor. One day the former betrayed this in words like the following: "I desire to refuse you, and I know not what it is that prevents my doing so."—On a certain morning, Sister Marie-Catherine found it impossible to see the Mother before entering the choir. Approaching her seat, she timidly asked leave to communicate. The answer that she received was merely a sign in the negative. Sister Marie-Catherine had generously offered the sacrifice to God, when she felt her Superioress

at her side, and heard her say that she could not resist the impulse to withdraw the prohibition that she had just given her. Mother Marie-Joséphine feared to take upon herself the responsibility of allowing daily Communion while, at the same time, she no less dreaded the danger of opposing the designs of God by her refusal. In her dilemma she resolved to submit the case to Mgr. du Pont des Loges, the worthy prelate of Metz. After several interviews with Sister Marie-Catherine, the Bishop gave his approval, which secured to her the crowning grace of her desires. "The first time," said she, "that I presented myself to the Bishop, it was without any preparation. An interior grace, strong and powerful, raised me above myself, and I felt that Our Lord would place upon my lips the words that I ought to use. His Lordship, with his characteristic wisdom, explained to me the perfection of the common life, the dangers of any departure from it, etc., etc.—'My Lord,' I said, 'I am perfectly submissive to all that you shall please to ordain; for to obey, is the most pressing desire of my soul.'"—The Holy Spirit having spoken through His organ, daily Communion from this time consummated the happy intimacy between Jesus Christ and His chosen Spouse. Should some unforeseen obstacle seem about to prevent her communicating, scarcely had she accepted the sacrifice before an ever kind Providence smoothed away the difficulty, making of the very obstacle the means whereby to realize her holy cravings. One of the music teachers, an extern, was one day suddenly attacked by sickness just as Sister Marie-Catherine was about to go to the choir to communicate. The sufferer begged not to be left alone. Sister Marie-Catherine unhesitatingly yielded to her request, feeling sure that by so doing she would accomplish God's holy

will. She laid the sufferer on a couch, and sat down calmly beside her to await her return to consciousness, for the sick woman had fainted. Soon she heard the words, "Please to send for a carriage to take me home." Sister Marie-Catherine lost no time in executing the request. She was obliged to pass the anti-choir, and as she did so, she heard the sacristan repeating the *Confiteor*. O how fortunate! She was just in time to take her rank for Holy Communion. She did so, received Jesus, and returned to her charge filled with transports of gratitude. Our most amiable Saviour frustrated all efforts to deprive her of her celestial nourishment. If need be, He would go so far as to render her invisible for that end. A certain Superioress, Mother M. N—, did not like to have the Tabernacle opened when there was only one Sister to communicate at Mass, celebrated during the morning prayer. For some reason, Sister Marie-Catherine was once in this position, she being the only one to receive at that time. The portress tried to find her the evening before, in order to prepare her for the sacrifice that she would have to make the next morning. She searched diligently for her, but nowhere was Sister Marie-Catherine to be found. The portress, at last, gave up the search, and informed the Superioress that it was impossible for her to deliver the message to Sister Marie-Catherine. "Very well," replied the Superioress, "let things take their course."—Ignorant of what had taken place, Sister Marie-Catherine went, as usual, to Holy Communion the next morning. At the noon recreation of the same day, the portress said to her, "How fortunate for you that you could not be found yesterday evening! I had an unwelcome piece of news for you. Where had you hidden yourself?"—"At what

hour?" inquired Sister Marie-Catherine.—"At half-past four," answered the Sister. "Why, at that hour, I was making my meditation before the picture of the Sacred Heart. I heard you walking in the infirmary," responded Sister Marie-Catherine quietly. "Then why did you not speak?" inquired the other.—"Because I did not think that I ought to interrupt my prayer, and besides, it was broad daylight. You certainly could have seen me."—Interrogated afterward upon this circumstance, not the only one of its kind, Sister Marie-Catherine answered: "I feel that sometimes I cannot be seen. But I cannot say how it happens, and I am not permitted any reflections." Another favor, different in nature, but not less wonderful, was about this period granted her on many occasions. The witnesses of it were persons of known veracity. A pious girl, who had been in the service of the convent for many years, had just left Sister Marie-Catherine on a certain occasion. But on entering the dormitory, she saw her before her. Amazed, and hardly crediting her own eyes, she raised her hands and cried to Heaven for an explanation of the prodigy. Again, one of the Sisters who was employed with Sister Marie-Catherine had just been talking to her. She crossed the corridor when, to her utter surprise, she found herself face to face with the same Sister. The Superioress interrogated her on the matter, saying: "Sister Marie-Catherine, how is this? You are seen in several different places at the same time. How can this be?"—Sister Marie-Catherine answered with her customary simplicity; "Indeed, Mother, I do not know. I am conscious of something strange about me, but I make no account of it. Several duties sometimes claim my attention at the same time and in different parts of the house. I cannot attend to all at

once, but I hear a voice, the voice of Our Lord, saying to me: 'Be in peace. Confide in My love,' and so I do. Ah, Mother" she added with a quiet smile, "I often think myself happy for not having been born some centuries ago."—"Why so?" inquired the Superioress.—"Because they would have burned me alive for a witch. And, I must confess, that they would have had good reason for doing so."

CHAPTER XI.

Sister Marie-Catherine Receives Prophetic Light.

Souls in all ages have been enlightened by the spirit of prophecy. The process of their canonization bears witness to this truth. To question private revelation, would be to ignore one of the special characteristics of the sanctity of the true Church, and even to cast a doubt upon the sovereign power of Almighty God, who gives more or less of this light, according to the designs of His divine wisdom over the soul. It is more frequently less a personal favor than a special help to such as are called to great things for His glory.

The Revolution of February, 1848, had demolished the throne of Louis-Philippe, to the astonishment of all, for his reign seemed peaceful and secured. Affairs could not long support the tension put upon them. Misgivings filled the hearts of the people, and soon came days that confirmed them. The horrors of civil war in Paris, the murder of Archbishop d'Affre froze every heart with terror. All felt that it was a question of life or death for French

society, and awaited the result with dread and anguish. The days of June were considered, also, days of triumph.

An aged priest, Father X—, to whom the scenes of carnage recalled those of the "Great Revolution," went to confide to Sister Marie-Catherine his sad forbodings. Would he, he asked, have the courage of his youthful days to meet the chances and dangers of exile? Face to face with the scaffold, would not his weak nature fail in strength to mount it, and in courage to confess his faith? Sister Marie-Catherine answered him with assurance that left no room to doubt: "Father, be confident. You will die calmly in your bed, and your death will be that of the just." Her prediction was fully verified.

She foresaw that, even if religion and order had nothing to fear from the present Revolution, the moment would come when security would no longer exist. At this date, 1848, she beheld unrolled before her eyes a series of events, whose realization was reserved for a more remote period. The Council, the war, our hospital, the Commune, the conflagration of Paris, passed in pictures before her affrighted mind. In speaking of the Council, and describing the magnificent reunion of Bishops, she was transported with admiration. "Never," said she, "could I have imagined such a spectacle. O Holy Catholic Church, what power, what vitality God communicates to you!"—But her words evoked an expression of doubt from her hearers. "Who dreams of a Council?" cried the Superioress. "No one has even thought of such a thing."—"Mother, I say what I see, and as I think I see it. Our Lord knows whether I tell the truth or not, and the future will confirm it."—Again, it was the picture of our improvised hospital that was presented to her mental gaze. Once when in the study-hall, something unpleas-

ant became visible to her, although unseen by others. She tried to banish it, burying her face in her hands, and exclaiming: "O what a boarding-school I see here! My God, can it be possible!" Then she described in vivid terms the picture that she saw. Its future realization fully confirmed her words. It was the same with the frightful scenes of the Paris Commune. She spoke of the sinister glare of the fire, the flames spreading far and near, the falling walls, the bodies of the victims heaped up in caves, their cries of pain and distress. These heartrending scenes several times repeated, produced such an effect upon her as to cause her to faint in the choir. Long accustomed to occupy herself with God alone, time weakened the impression, and she retained only the remembrance of the remarkable events that had been foreshown her. She submitted them to her Superioress, though in total indifference to the judgment that might be passed on them. Sometimes her account was listened to in perfect silence; again, it was received with an air of doubt or an incredulous smile, which sent her away covered with confusion. To scenes of the distant future there frequently succeeded warnings of more immediate happenings, whose consequences would be more disastrous to the Community. On the night of July 30, 1849, when the whole convent was in repose, Sister Marie-Catherine distinctly heard a voice saying: "Arise! They are going to ring the fire-alarm!"—She arose at once in obedience to the warning of her guardian-angel. She was scarcely clothed when the dreaded alarm rent the air, and loud knocking was heard at the gate of the woodhouse. It was the firemen knocking and shouting for water from our cistern, the fire being in a hay-loft next the convent. We may imagine what a quarter of an hour's delay would

have been for us without the interposition of Divine Providence. It frequently happened that Sister Marie-Catherine read the interior of souls even at a distance. One of our former chaplains, after hearing the confession of a dying person, came to our convent to exercise the same priestly function for our Community. What was his surprise to hear Sister Marie-Catherine say after receiving the absolution: "Make haste, Father, to that dying person whom you have just left. She concealed a sin in her confession, and what a misfortune should she die without making reparation!"—This fact we have from the lips of the priest who received the communication. He never lost the feeling of lively gratitude for the merciful conduct of Almighty God in behalf of that poor, erring creature upon whom hell counted as an assured conquest.

Sister Marie-Catherine could divine, also, the thoughts of those around her. "Several times," says one of them, "she assured me on certain points that I had never mentioned to her, and advised me to guard against dangers of whose existence God alone could have enlightened her."—A few words on supernatural favors sufficed to elicit from her a decision so clear as to exclude doubt. "That comes from the Holy Spirit?" or "There is in this some mixture of the human." Mlle. Pauline-Marie-Jaricot, whose heroic charity gave birth to grand works like 'The Propagation of the Faith' and 'The Living Rosary,' had several times inaugurated a preservation class for working women. Each time, however, she had the grief to see her confidence abused and her efforts come to naught. At last, reduced to indigence, she had to endure the attacks of creatures, rebuffs, censures, calumnies, contempt, in a word, all that was capable of daunting a valiant heart. Her director, a holy religious, and the witness

of her strange and humiliating trials, dreaded their effect upon her, and felt the necessity of some salutary diversion. He begged Mother Marie-Seraphine Fournier, Superioress of the first Visitation Convent of Paris, whose experience in the discernment of souls was well known to him, to assist him with her counsel. Mlle. Jaricot was, in consequence, installed in an apartment adjoining the cloister, and confided to the charitable care of the Mother. But so hidden was the action of God, that the skilful directress dared not pronounce upon the spirit that was conducting the tried soul. Knowing and appreciating the virtue of Sister Marie-Catherine, Mother Seraphine had recourse to her. She consulted her about Mlle Jaricot's trials, without revealing, however, any of her antecedents. In dictating her reply, Sister Marie-Catherine asked that it should be reproduced textually, "Because," as she remarked, "by changing a single word, we might alter the sense of what God wishes to express."—Our Lord revealed to her in Holy Communion that Mlle. Jaricot was led by the Holy Spirit; that her state was good; that having been the instigator of numerous beneficent works applauded by the world, the crucifying trials that she was now undergoing, were meant to humble her, and to make her forget the good that she had accomplished, in order to preserve her from vain-glory. A magnificent Brief of Pope Leo XIII., issued some years later, confirmed Sister Marie-Catherine's words.

We shall close this chapter with the following incidents. A certain ecclesiastic, a friend of our convent, was greatly tormented by scruples. One day, he said to Mother Marie-Seraphine: "I should like to know what Almighty God thinks of me."—Mother Marie-Seraphine made no reply at the moment, but the next time she saw him,

which was shortly after, she said: "Father, do you remember telling me your desire to know what God thinks of you? I told Sister Marie-Catherine to ask Our Lord, and here is His answer, 'I am not displeased with that priest, but he yields too much to his fears.'"—Then she entered into a detail of his interior so clear and so precise that the priest recognized himself perfectly. It was evident that God had clearly manifested his interior to Sister Marie-Catherine. Some time after, being again tormented by scruples, he invoked the Sister's guardian-angel, and begged him to inspire her to pray for him. His disquietude instantly vanished. Another priest wrote that, without even mentioning a word of his soul's craving, the good Sister said some words to him that were a whole résumé of a great demand that Our Lord had made him during his thanksgiving after his first Mass.

Thus did her pure eye penetrate the secrets of hearts. Facts similar to those already recorded, will be found in succeeding pages. Almost all the revelations vouchsafed her in her latter years were of a general character, and related to the trials of Holy Church. We shall treat of them in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

Death of Mother Marie-Therese de Tholozan. Government of Mother Marie-Therese Dorr.

The suffering state of Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan told of her approaching call to a better world. It was the close of the year 1850, and she was able to make but short and rare visits to the Community assemblies. Her presence breathed of abandonment to God and confidence in His providence over her; and her face, despite acute suffering, reflected an expression of heavenly beatitude. When asked how she felt, she was accustomed to answer with a sweet smile: "I await the Lord." She spoke little, but her very silence was an exhortation. The dropsy gained ground rapidly, no remedy could arrest its progress. She was unable to communicate on the feast of our Holy Founder, St. Francis de Sales, though she assisted at Holy Mass. She seemed to be so absorbed in the Divine Presence that only with difficulty could she be recalled to herself, in order to conduct her to the infirmary. She said later in confidence to a Sister: "Our Lord has revealed to me that we must remain very tranquil. We must not be disquieted either for spiritual or temporal wants. He will take care of all, provided we are abandoned to His good pleasure. I had from Him a very clear understanding of this today. He loves this Community. What goodness! He ardently wishes us to love Him."—This was the last time that she left the infirmary. Her sickness increasing, she asked for the last Sacraments, and received them on the 31st of March.

She went through the various ceremonies prescribed for that solemn moment with much humility, testifying her gratitude to the Community in words so impressive that all were affected to tears. Mgr. de Pont des Loges, our venerated Bishop, came to give her a last blessing. After a short interview, he retired, saying, "I have seen in her how the saints die. You should desire a similar end. As for myself, I beg it of God." Before leaving, the Bishop gave permission to administer Holy Viaticum whenever she desired it.

Next morning, the Sisters gathered around her bed to beg a last advice and blessing. "We must see God alone," she said. "That is the only thing of any worth."—Again, "Will what God wills, and attach yourselves to His will alone. This is the way to preserve the spirit of our Holy Founders."—The seventh day of her illness was a day of intense suffering. Toward evening Our Lord was pleased to console her. She saw the angels surrounding her bed of pain, and received from them sublime knowledge on the mercy and goodness of God. A ray of light from her eternal home seemed to shine upon her, and her heart overflowed with love and confidence. That night she exclaimed: "This Community is in heaven, in the Heart of Jesus. I have seen it there. Oh what graces it will continue to receive! Recommend to it, at this moment particularly, to seek only the will of God."—She suffered greatly from oppression, and her body was one painful wound. But a complaint never escaped her lips; only an expression of pain on her face revealed the secret of her suffering. Approaching dissolution became evident on the morning of the seventeenth. The Community gathered around her bed, and fifteen minutes later, her soul fled so quietly to the house of its eternity

that her last sigh was scarcely perceived. This was on Holy Saturday of 1851.

Thus was extinguished that pure light whose supernatural rays had vivified the Community for twenty-four years of government, as laborious as it was fruitful in trials of all kinds. When Mother Marie de Sales Chapuis received notice of her death, she exclaimed several times: "What a beautiful crown Mother Marie-Thérèse has gained! God shows clearly today that He renders to every one according to his works." The assurance with which these words were uttered, aroused in her hearers a conviction that she had a clear vision of what she asserted.

What were Sister Marie-Catherine's dispositions when God's hand weighed so heavily on the Community? To the trial which she was called on to bear along with the rest of the Sisters, was added another known to Him alone, and which deeply wounded her filial and devoted heart. Is it not Divine Providence who forms the most sacred chains in order to wrench them asunder, and that with the sole intent of perfecting His cherished friends in the holy virtue of detachment? During the last illness of Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan, Sister Marie-Catherine spent every free moment at her side. But the intimacy of their communications was interrupted by the presence of another lay-sister, also in constant attendance at the bedside. For years Sister Marie-Catherine had lavished on her venerated Mother her intelligent care, the fruit of long experience; but now she must be simply a spectator of the devotedness of the new infirmarians. She suffered from this more than can be expressed, recognizing at the same time the Divine Will, and opening her heart to welcome it.

The cross of separation was very bitter to the Assistant

of the Community, Sister Marie-Thérèse Dorr. She wept the loss of the deceased Mother, as the saints weep for those united to them in God, with tears of perfect resignation, which left the soul perfectly submissive to God. She arose above her personal feelings, to discharge the duties incumbent upon her on such an occasion, and she found strength even to console her desolate companions. She had always experienced an invincible repugnance for high offices. Her only ambition was to hold the last place in the convent. The charm of such a position was, the right it gave to all others to command her. This was the only species of reserve that God discovered in her generous soul, and He unrelentingly pursued it. In vain, were her humble supplications poured forth to Him for the warding off of the blow that she foresaw was about to fall upon her. The days preceding the election were for her days of agony. "I could not believe," said she, "that one could support such suffering."—She was elected Mother, and her indefatigable zeal guided the Community in the way traced out for them by their Holy Founder, St. Francis de Sales. Despite her humble submission to the unerring decrees of Almighty God, she could not restrain her tears; but they were the only tribute granted to weak nature. Strong in the protection of the Mother of God, to whom she had confided the dreaded burden, she courageously put her hand to the work intrusted to her. The religious under her charge soon recognized in her the heart of a Mother, and they saw verified the prophetic words of Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan: "The day will come when this treasure will be valued at its worth."

We may easily understand that, self-diffident as was the new Superioress, the direction of such a soul as Sister

Marie-Catherine must at first, have been something appalling, something to render her very uncertain, very anxious as to the nature of the spirit that conducted her. She spared no pains to acquire perfect security on this point; she studied and exercised Sister Marie-Catherine, and she consulted persons competent to advise her. Their judgment invariably approved the direction that she gave, and Sister Marie-Catherine's simplicity, uprightness of intention, and perfect obedience left no doubt regarding the nature of her graces, and their beneficial effects.

Mother Marie-Thérèse Dorr, to whom we shall devote a few pages, that her beautiful soul may be better known, governed the Community according to the Rule and its spirit. Its perfect practice was the object of her ambition. For this end, it was necessary to add some rooms to the convent, as their need had been long felt for the convenience of the various offices. But as funds were low, it was for Providence to determine when the contemplated project could be realized.

That time had now come. Old buildings were examined and condemned. New ones arose in their place, which, though not as large as might be desired, were spacious enough for the employments marked out by the plan of the Founder. With what vigilant care and prudent zeal, the new Superioress pursued her difficult undertaking! Before determining on anything, she consulted Almighty God, reflected long, and then pressed straight on, regardless of human considerations. "Once God's will is made known to me," she said, "nothing can hinder me in its accomplishment."—Her discernment enabled her to seize the propitious moment for the execution of her enterprises, and to follow with gentle firmness the

plan traced out. She met all difficulties with serenity. Some years later, she had the privilege of erecting a temple to the Divine Majesty, a privilege that she had long and earnestly desired. In the midst of the cares and embarrassments inseparable from such a work, the happiness of offering to our adorable Jesus a home in some degree worthy of Him, sweetened the bitterness of the contradictions that fell to her share. When the time came for its solemn consecration, she was amply indemnified for all past annoyances. Trials of all kinds had fallen upon her, but she had no other witness than God alone, no other confidant than His Sacred Heart. Some of the Sisters who knew the opposition brought about by seculars, instigated by the spirit of darkness, rejoice today in the thought of the rich treasures of merit that she now enjoys, and that will be hers for a never-ending eternity.

The chief characteristic of her virtue, was a loving dependence on the will of God. In many circumstances, under which a soul less strong in faith would have turned back, Mother Marie-Thérèse Dorr silently adored the Divine Will. "Is the will of God not charming enough to be the only motive of our love, without that of self-interest?" She called it the manna of the desert, and she gathered it so faithfully every day that, before her death, she could confidently say, "I have always lived in total dependence on God's will, no occupation having power to divert me from it." In 1866, Mother Marie-Thérèse took the humble rank of a deposed Superioress, a rank which she earnestly desired to hold, on account of its favoring her attraction for the hidden life. From the Community, which she had governed for twelve years, and for whose spiritual and temporal good she had spent herself, she now begged but one privilege, namely, that

of living hidden and unknown. But vain were her efforts. The light of sanctity radiated from her; she breathed only sweetness and love. We hoped to enjoy the fruits of her experience and consummate virtue, but we hoped in vain. The slow consumption that had long undermined her health suddenly assumed an alarming phase. The last month of her life was passed in acute suffering, but deep peace. During that time, loving acquiescence, the precursive sign of a coming cross, took possession of her. She used to say to us: "God is preparing me for a sacrifice. What can it be? I know not what it is; but *'my heart is ready. Lord, my heart is ready.'*"

On July 18, 1868, about four o'clock in the morning, she had a copious hemorrhage, and was obliged to call for help. At five, she had another. The sentence of death had gone forth. Her changed appearance told that the hour of dissolution would soon strike, and her look of tender compassion seemed to say to her Superioress: "Mother, receive with love. In vain will you dispute me with Our Lord!"—The physician was hurriedly sent for. He found the danger imminent. The progress of her disease was so rapid that Extreme Unction was administered at once. "I abyss myself in the will of God," she said. "This is all that I know how to do."—On the 19th, about one in the afternoon, she had another crisis, accompanied by suffocation. We knew that the supreme moment was fast approaching. Till almost the last, she united with the prayers of the Community. The movements of her lips ceased only a quarter of an hour later, when she breathed forth her soul in the presence of the great Judge. The most ardent wishes of this generous soul were accomplished. She died arms in hand, and in the humble position of inferior. Many and bitter

had been her trials, emanating either from a divine source, or from a human cause. Such was the Superioress called after Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan to guide Sister Marie-Catherine in the ways of holiness. Following the example of the Superioresses that had preceded her, she had left Sister Marie-Catherine in charge of the children's infirmary.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sister Marie-Catherine and the Pupils.

In presenting to our readers a sketch of Sister Marie-Catherine's labors in the convent, we have shown her endowed with aptitude natural and supernatural, which made of her a perfect infirmarian. We shall now consider the moral and religious influence that she exercised so long in the boarding school. In peaceful possession of the Sovereign Good, she entertained for the pupils under her care feelings full of affection, and there fell upon them from her heart, that sanctuary of charity, a sympathetic ray of loving compassion. We were passing through an epoch, in which her mission of devotedness assumed a singularly touching character. Two children between the ages of four and five, whose unfortunate condition excited her deep commiseration, were confided to her care. One of them had been saved from death by a kind of miracle. Its mother, laboring under mental aberration, was in the act of giving it a death-blow, when its father appeared in time to rescue it. A pious friend brought the child to us, that it might have a home of safety. The second was a

child endowed with remarkable intelligence and enchanting beauty. An accident, whilst still in the arms of her nurse, brought on curvature of the spine, and prevented her walking. The mother's vanity was wounded, and she refused to recognize her child. The father less unnatural, gave it a place in the household. It was committed to the care of a servant, but deprived of a mother's affection, and kept in a distant room apart from the family. One of our out-sisters heard of the desolate fate of the little creature and, filled with compassion, begged Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan to receive her. When the poor little victim of maternal pride was brought to us, she was placed under Sister Marie-Catherine's care, and accepted by her as a gift from God. The child was an angel of piety. She would sometimes say: "Open the roof for me, that I may see the good God, and fly to Him." Her purity of conscience was so great that Père Martin, our confessor, assured us that she had never committed a deliberate venial sin. Being accused once of telling a falsehood, she earnestly begged for the confessor, and her tears ceased to flow only when she was assured that she had not offended God. The physician came one day to see another sick child. He happened to pass before the bed of the little one of whom we have been speaking, and saw her playing with her doll. Casting a searching glance at her, he exclaimed: "This child is dying! She will not live the day out." We could not believe his words. We called in another doctor, and he corroborated the opinion of the first. Her parents were immediately notified. The mother, who up to this time had ignored her afflicted child, came in haste, her heart full of maternal tenderness, and longing to repair the wrong she had done her little one. The confessor, who

had been hastily sent for, began to recite the Litany of the dying. As no symptoms of approaching dissolution were manifest, Sister Marie-Catherine was told to retire for the night. As prompt as clear-sighted, she hurried to the choir, the Community being at matins, and returned with the Superioress. When the child perceived the latter she smiled, and said: "I thank you, my dear Mother," and after a few slight spasms, died in the arms of her devoted infirmarian, to whom was vouchsafed the favor of following the angelic child beyond the boundary of time, and of beholding her eternal happiness.

A prophetic instinct directed many of Sister Marie-Catherine's actions. One of our pupils, who afterward became a religious, tells the following incident, which for a long time appeared to her inexplicable, but which she now regards as stamped with the seal of the supernatural: "I awoke early one morning so ravenously hungry that I thought I should die. I screamed out, 'I am starving! Help me!' To call for assistance, and to see Sister Marie-Catherine at my bedside were simultaneous actions. She presented me some warm nourishment, which saved my life. The doctor soon came. He said to me: 'You are very fortunate. A man died today on Rue Haut-Poirier,' (the same street as that on which was our convent) 'from a fit of hunger too tardily and imprudently satisfied.' I shall never forget the coincidence of Sister Marie-Catherine's appearance and my awaking. Whence came the voice that told her of my pressing need? How was it that she was there just at the right moment, her cell being at the other end of the dormitory? I know not save that it was so."

When the pupils had their little festivals, Sister Marie-Catherine was their ordinary resource in all questions of

costumes, etc. She would lend her assistance for hours, open the wardrobe, go from top to bottom of the house to satisfy the children, never showing the least impatience or weariness. We felt that God and His good pleasure actuated her, for it was easy to see that these days so trying to nature were her best days. Her spirit of faith always and everywhere pointed out her duty. The most insignificant things when willed by God, were of as much import in her eyes as the most elevated.

There seemed to be some irresistible attraction between Sister Marie-Catherine and the little ones. If indisposition took a pupil to the infirmary, no matter where her collection of games, picture-books, etc., might be, in five minutes the lap of her devoted infirmarian became the resting-place for those cherished objects. "Sister, tell me what this means, if you please."—"Sister, tell me one of your pretty stories."—and the kind infirmarian quickly responded to the little patient's desire. Does not Jesus speak by the tongues of children, and was not Sister Marie-Catherine ever on the alert for the sweet voice of His will? And yet the sympathy between the nurse and the little ones never degenerated into familiarity. Always dignified and religiously reserved, Sister Marie-Catherine commanded respect and, whilst opening her heart to confidence, she seemed to place an impassable barrier between her religious character and the manifestation of affection too human. She never embraced. The children knew this, and never attempted it with her. She was richly endowed with natural gifts, which exercised a fascinating influence over the fickle children. She astonished and, at the same time, charmed them by the variety of her resources, by her rare talent for suddenly effecting a change in their ideas; and her bright wit would

bring the smile to their lips, although their eyes might be swimming in tears. She excelled, above all, in telling them their faults at the right moment. With a pleasant smile, she would show them their little inconsistencies, and that so ingenuously that the most sensitive loved her all the better for it. In a word, she had the happy faculty of satisfying hearts and attracting love. She made use of her gifts to draw souls to God, though without ever rising above the humble station of lay-sister that He had assigned her. She exercised the wonderful ascendancy of her mere presence to uphold lawful authority. The secret of that ascendancy lay in the supernatural character of her mission. It was impossible to have intercourse with her without discovering her intimate union with God. The serenity of her countenance, her equable disposition, her heavenly look, the inspired tone of her voice,—all commanded confidence and veneration. The pupils evidently saw that the interior of souls was manifest to her, either in a general manner, by a kind of repulsion from sin on her part, or by a particular discernment of the obstacles in certain hearts to the designs of God's love. No one could support her gentle look unless possessed of the testimony of a good conscience. "Whenever I was naughty," said one of our pupils, "I avoided Sister Marie-Catherine. I could not stand her glance. It seemed to pierce to the bottom of my heart."—One day, an unruly little lady was sent by the Directress to Sister Marie-Catherine, to beg her prayers. At that moment, Sister Marie-Catherine happened to be on her knees absorbed in God. She arose on being addressed, and discovered to the little girl the thoughts that had chased one another through her mind during Holy Mass that morning. She rebuked her conduct, and suggested

means for her improvement. Conscious of the truth of what had been told her, and full of confusion, the child ran away, whilst the Sister called after her: "Do not deserve to be sent to me again in this way. "The little one was filled with amazement, and she amended her ways.

The light-hearted girls sometimes took advantage of her kindness, and tried to deceive her. One of them tells us: "Sister Marie-Catherine kept in the infirmary cupboard a large book. I can see it there now. If I recollect rightly, it was a commentary on the Apocalypse. Terrible child that I was, I ransacked her things, and that book tempted me. She warned me that it was not for children to read. Her words were fruitless, and her persevering refusals to let me have it, only whetted my eagerness to dive into its contents. I laid my plans, for I was determined to penetrate its secrets. Next morning, whilst Sister Marie-Catherine was at her meditation, I went to the cupboard, in which the key was hanging, possessed myself of the mysterious book, and discovered, as I richly deserved, that it offered nothing to interest children. During the day, whilst performing some duty in the infirmary, Sister Marie-Catherine fixed her eyes on me rather inquiringly, as I thought. Then, with a knowing smile, she took up the forbidden volume, and changed its place. I began to feel uneasy. 'Sister, are you going to take that book away?' I asked.—'Yes, to prevent your reading it again,' she answered.—'*I!*' I exclaimed innocently, '*I* read in that book! O never!'—'Yes, indeed,' she responded, giving me a look that I still feel. 'You read in it this morning while I was at six o'clock Mass.'—I was covered with confusion at her words, and I immediately concluded that she had been peeping through the keyhole when I thought myself alone. This

conviction lasted until her sanctity became more generally manifest, and than I understood that her knowledge of my action was supernatural.”—Sister Marie-Catherine’s power to read souls was not an effect of natural discernment, which supposes observation by means of which we ascend from the slightest appearances to the principle from which they spring. There was no one a greater stranger, both by character and education, to the art of reasoning than Sister Marie-Catherine. Neither was her spirit of discernment the fruit of experience, for her pure soul was acquainted with evil only by name. Prevented by the grace of preservation, her loving heart found rest in holy and legitimate affections alone. At the close of her saintly life, we heard her say: “I never loved any one but my Superioresses.” To raise her affections above material objects cost her no struggle. Worldliness never tarnished her innocence. God was ever her only love. Like unto the angels, she arose to Him by a heavenly attraction. Her power of discerning spirits was, then, a supernatural intuition, her intelligence taking no other part in it than that of receiving the divine ray. In these moments of interior illumination, one glance sufficed to discover to her the depths of a conscience and the secrets it would have wished to hide even from itself. The most specious exterior could not blind her. Under whatever disguise it might present itself, vice lay unmasked; its repulsiveness was shown her so clearly that illusion became impossible. One day, on entering the boarding-school, she suddenly came to a stand-still. She appeared to be seized by some impression whose cause was altogether inexplicable to the beholder. The Superioress alone had the right to know. “Mother,” said she, “N.N., who seems to be virtuous, is not so in reality. She is

trying to keep up appearances. God has manifested her soul to me. The devil rules her." The child, finding herself discovered, confessed all, and made good use of the remedies prescribed for her amendment. "It sometimes happened," said another pupil, "that I had qualms of conscience, which kept me from communicating. I used to swallow a little water when making my toilette, and give that as a pretext for not receiving Holy Communion. On such an occasion, while serving me at breakfast, Sister Marie-Catherine said to me in a stern tone: 'You swallowed that water this morning purposely, in order to have an excuse for not communicating. I have asked Our Lord to forgive you.'—Who had told her? I conceived a high idea of her penetration, though I did not go so far as to attribute her remark to a supernatural knowledge of me and my motives." Another pupil says: "I was once in the infirmary from some slight indisposition. I was also very much troubled over certain difficulties in my own home. I had never mentioned them to any one, although they were constantly in my mind. What was my surprise to hear the dear infirmarian speaking words that exactly responded to my thoughts, and consoling me in my trouble, as if she knew all about it."

To comfort the afflicted, to encourage despondent hearts, to revive faith in souls too easily seduced by the things of the world, to point out, and at times even to overthrow with holy liberty, the obstacles that God would encounter to His designs in chosen souls, wonderfully prevented by His grace,—such was her daily mission. Under the influence of her sweet and energetic words, how many dispositions were changed, how many acts were accomplished whose secret will be known only in

eternity! Many of her words have left ineffaceable impressions upon souls, and their remembrance has, at some special moment in life, been decisive for good.

Our former pupils loved to have recourse to her counsel, and to beg her prayers in all the important actions of their life. What assistance she rendered them and others on various occasions! With what calmness, simplicity, and prudence she advised them! Many who had placed confidence in her during their school days, preserved the same all their life. Their trials and difficulties became to a certain extent her own and, like another Moses, she incessantly raised her arms to God for help. It was no rare thing for her to know of their wants from a distance, and without having been informed of them in any natural way. "Mother," she said one day, "How I have suffered these three nights! God keeps constantly before my eyes the deplorable state of N. N." (A former pupil living at the time some distance from Metz.) "The devil is multiplying his snares around her. She struggles more and more feebly, her will opposes but weak resistance. God has shown me that prayer alone can sustain her. O Mother, let us pray, let us pray!" Humanly speaking, Sister Marie-Catherine could have no clue to these struggles, as nothing exterior excited suspicion. The Superioress, the confidante of this young girl, alone was cognizant of them; consequently, she recognized the truth of the Sister's fears. "She often appeared to know things," said another of our pupils, "upon which she absolutely refused to speak when interrogated. But her glance, her silence seemed to say: 'It is not permitted me to divulge the secret of my God.'"

On certain occasions, the future appeared unveiled before her. "There are two persons in Sister Marie-Cath-

erine," said one of the pupils after leaving school. "One is gay, simple, natural, like any good religious; the other is not she, though she speaks through her on certain days and at certain hours. In one of her moments of inspiration, she said to me: 'You love the world, and the world loves you. You think to find in it sovereign felicity. Ah well! the future will teach you. After enjoying all earthly good that a creature can desire, you will have years of trial so keen, so multiplied that you will be constrained to cast yourself into the hands of God, and recognize the nothingness of all outside of Him.' Time verified her words to the letter." It was, however, only when taken, as it were, by surprise, or impelled by an irresistible movement, that she uttered such words. "Shall I be a religious?" asked one of the pupils. "When I shall be Pope," answered Sister Marie-Catherine with that air of assurance, which in such cases was a sure sign of inspiration. It was thought at the time that she was in fault. The young girl entered the convent, where she passed many months in the fervent practice of the Rule. Sister Marie-Catherine kept a modest silence, but when pressed to say what she thought, she would smilingly remark: "Have we not agreed that she will be a religious when I shall be Pope?"—Time proved that she did not speak amiss. The postulant, animated merely by sensible devotion, soon found that her attraction for the cloister had vanished. She returned to the world, and became a model wife and mother. "When I was eleven years old," says one of our Sisters, "I was with some older girls who were discussing their religious vocation. Sister Marie-Catherine, happening to pass where we were, and catching the drift of our conversation, said in a tone of conviction: 'I assure you that not one of those that think

of being a religious will ever become one. Mlle. Clémence, who has not said a word, will be the only one chosen by God.' Her words were verified." Sister Marie-Catherine's mission at the boarding-school was rendered fruitful by prayer, and especially by suffering, that powerful helper of man in divine works. In a retreat made by many of our former pupils, amongst whom were some that could not resist worldly allurements, the priest who conducted the exercises said at the opening one: "To obtain miracles, we must be flayed alive." It was the Sister in charge of the school who relates the incident. She says: "Sister Marie-Catherine met me shortly after, and said, 'Your part is labor, mine is suffering.'—I can readily believe that she offered herself as a victim, for we obtained miracles of grace in that retreat. Whilst the good Sister loaded me with attentions, she herself from three o'clock in the afternoon, sometimes earlier, was obliged to lie on her bed, looking like a dying person, and unable to take any nourishment. This state ended only with the retreat. The day after, her life resumed its wonted course."—Her sufferings during those days of retreat must have been fearful, if we may judge by the words that escaped her: "O Sister," she exclaimed to the Directress of the school, "You will not have these retreats often, will you?"

To pray, to labor, and to suffer, in order to establish the reign of Jesus Christ in souls committed to our care, and to follow them to their last moment, is the work of an extraordinary charity; but Sister Marie-Catherine carried her charity even farther than this, for she followed them to the place of expiation itself. There came to us from a distance a scholar belonging to a distinguished family. She was furnished with the highest recommendations.

Her exemplary conduct at the boarding-school might have been held up as a model to the other pupils, and she was perfectly satisfied to remain unnoticed. She was never questioned upon her past, for virtue apparently so solid, gave rise to no doubt as to its having been preceded by a pure and innocent life. But with admirable delicacy the young girl resolved to open her heart to the Superioress respecting it. She did so with the humility and courage of a soul prevented by special grace. Her religious vocation developed day by day, and she wished before asking her admission to the novitiate that we should know how unworthy she was of the favor. Her secret was scrupulously kept, nothing transpired without, and nothing happened to diminish the high reputation for virtue that she enjoyed among her companions and teachers. Two years had glided by since her entrance as a pupil, when she was stricken down by illness. The physician saw nothing serious in her state, and permitted her to follow in part the ordinary routine of the boarding-school when a sudden crisis, wholly unforeseen, took her from us. During the three days following her death, Sister Marie-Catherine went through incredible sufferings. She presented herself several times before her Superioress, and said: "Mother, I ask you no questions, but permit me to say to you that I see a frightful mystery hovering over this life. My soul is frozen with terror. God made me descend to the bottom of the abyss where His mercy has been seeking this poor lost sheep. His justice demands it, and I must bear its rigor."

Deceased pupils often appeared to their devoted infirmarian to beg for prayers. Sister Marie-Catherine was once quietly seated near a sick child, when the latter cried out in fright: "Sister, look! What is that shadow

walking around you?"—"Tis only a ray of light," answered the Sister visibly embarrassed, and endeavoring to divert the child's attention. "Sister, Sister, I see it still! It is following you. Do, please, tell me what it is."—"Child," replied the Sister, who could not evade the young questioner without compromising the truth, "it is a Visitation scholar, begging prayers for the relief of her soul."—It was, indeed, a very pure soul. After eight days, it again appeared to tell of its deliverance and entrance into glory.

Time and again did the relations of the scholars ask to see good Sister Marie-Catherine. They loved her simple and ingenuous manners, her rare vivacity, and the refinement that springs from a good education, which elevated her above her rank, and attracted to her in a high degree esteem and confidence. Notwithstanding her insurmountable repugnance for the parlor, she went there cheerfully when obedience so directed. It was a true penance for her at first, because, absorbed as she constantly was by the divine action, all her efforts to resist became at times powerless. Her supernatural state betrayed itself in ardent words and in the inspired tone of her voice when pronouncing judgment on questions submitted to her. When asked afterward, "Why did you say such and such a thing?" she would answer with astonishment: "If I said that, it was not I that spoke. I am not responsible at such times for what I say. I feel an impulse stronger than my own, and it admits of no resistance." She would often and unknown to herself utter prophetic words. When they were clearly realized, her reputation for sanctity began to spread through the little world that encompassed the Visitation, and either from curiosity or piety, crowds flocked to our parlors. Then

the humble Sister implored so beseechingly to be freed from such visits so trying to her humility, that her Superiors judged it prudent to screen her entirely from the world, and Almighty God permitted her to remain hidden from herself.

CHAPTER XIV.

Sister Marie-Catherine's Charity toward the Community.

The special theatre for the exercise of Sister Marie-Catherine's charity, was the boarding-school, and she was careful to confine herself to its limits. But if an accident happened, or symptoms of a serious and unknown nature appeared in the Community, her Superioress quickly called to her aid the experience and devotedness of the good infirmarian. They felt confident that neither would be at fault. Her little cell, in consequence, in which she loved to remain alone with God, became the rendezvous for all the miseries in the cloister. Far beyond the judgment of physicians and the decisions of art, were esteemed the judgment and the decisions of Sister Marie-Catherine. She shared the cares of the infirmarian of the Community. A glance at the patient told her the cause of the malady, and her intelligent charity furnished her with a thousand little remedies. The most loathsome sores she was sure to reserve for her own care, and she dressed them with gentle tact and steady hand. Such acts, so repugnant to nature, were performed with so much grace and cheerfulness that one might readily think them a sweet satisfaction to her. From the very first, she com-

bated her sense of delicacy so heroically that she soon triumphed over her repugnance.

"We should," says St. Jane Frances de Chantal, "have for our neighbor hearts great in love and support, being always disposed to serve, assist, console, and support him whenever we can, but cheerfully and cordially." It was this that Sister Marie-Catherine did. If at the bedside of the sick she was lavish of her care, she was not less generous with her kind words and consoling suggestions. After treating the ills of the body, she knew how to reach those of the soul. Skilful in feeling her way, she employed by turn and according to the need of the moment, vigorous reflections of faith or words full of holy joy; for she knew well that to restore cheerfulness is to close the door to the devil. Her affability of manner in the service of the sufferer, said more eloquently than word: "I am at your service. Use me as you please. I shall consider it a favor." So true are the words of a certain saint: "Love makes hearts enter into one another, and feel what each one feels." It was for Sister Marie-Catherine's heart a sweet consolation to have it in her power to show her neighbor by her services the love and gratitude that she bore him. We have her own testimony for this: "I have ever regarded as a precious grace the opportunity to lend my aid and devote myself to my Community. I have never been able to do so in a measure to satisfy my heart. I thirsted for it with an ardor that nothing could satiate. My greatest fear was, that the natural might mingle with the supernatural, so intense was my happiness."

Her devotedness betrayed itself in her persevering zeal to form the lay-postulants confided to her care. From the lofty height whence she viewed all that appertained

to the holy state of religion, she required for even the most minute details all the perfection of which they were capable. "Those little things are clothed with the will of God," she used to say, "and their end is, to prove our love for Him. Should we not, therefore, apply to them zealously?"—How her sensitive soul, animated by pure faith as it was, suffered when she beheld the negligence and disorder common to our day! How persistently she warred against that spirit! But habits of carelessness, however deeply seated, must inevitably yield to persevering efforts to the contrary. Before attaining the results she aimed at, however, Sister Marie-Catherine had to endure much chagrin while, at the same time, being the cause of annoyance to the opposite party. The work of transformation is always a thankless one for the operator, and a humiliating one for the subject of it. What exaggerated accusations, what severe judgments, though bearing the semblance of truth, were lodged against poor Sister Marie-Catherine! She knew it, she accepted it, but she varied not her principles, for the end she proposed to attain was as noble as it was supernatural.

Ever turning her eyes away from self, she judged and determined from her neighbor's standpoint. To give one's self to the neighbor,—is not that to give one's self to God? At such a height of perfection, her charity was shielded from egotism, whose coldness and narrowness were ever opposed to the devotedness of her soul. The neighbor, too often judged worthy of naught but indifference on account of his imperfections and faults of character, her faith showed her as the living image of Jesus Christ, and thus marked with sacred inviolability.

As we have said, to devote her time, her strength, her loving care to all without distinction, had become to her

a second nature, which divine grace strengthened. She swerved from the law of perfect equality only for the benefit of those from whom she had endured some pain. "God has so ordained," she used to say, "that my greatest happiness is to serve those that have in any way saddened me." Her charity for such persons was unbounded. Being on one occasion treated very unkindly, a favor which Almighty God knows how to procure for His chosen friends, she tasted all its bitterness. Not long after, the author of the unkind proceedings toward her, was stricken down by a secret malady, which necessitated the most painful and unremitting care. No sooner was Sister Marie-Catherine apprised of this, than she flew to her Superioress, and begged the favor of nursing the poor sufferer. The permission was granted. "Ah, Mother!" she said on retiring, "this is my best consolation."

She had formed the proper estimate of prayer. It was in her opinion all-powerful, and of it her charity made use with her wonted generosity. Her lively confidence led her to expect everything from the goodness of God, even miracles when the welfare of the Community demanded them. Clothed with the merits of Jesus Christ, her Divine Advocate, she presented herself before the Eternal Father with the faith that moves mountains. Can we be astonished that He turned in her favor the regular course of events, and revealed by a promise of life the power she swayed over His Heart. One of the Sisters, attacked by inflammation of the lungs, hung for several days between life and death. There remained but one ray of hope, and that was extinguished by the last medical consultation. We awaited the crisis. Sister Marie-Catherine had received an obedience from the Superioress to beg at Holy Communion the cure of the dying Sister.

She did so, and reported the result in these words: "Mother, Our Lord grants your desire. Sister N— will recover. Our Lord showed her to me at the door of a beautiful palace. Only a few steps more, and she would have entered. But our prayers prevented her doing so this time. Ah! she will have a long and painful journey full of sufferings, interior and exterior, before she reaches it a second time."—All this was exactly verified; for the eighteen years of life accorded the Sister, were years as laborious as they were meritorious for heaven. At other times, it was the answer of death that she received, positive, without appeal, as if Our Lord dreaded the irresistible ascendancy that she possessed over Him. Another Sister fell seriously ill. Knowing how much her loss would cost her Superioress, Sister Marie-Catherine offered to God her own life in exchange for the dying one. Her act, though one of pure charity, was not acceptable to God. He said to her in a tone of severity: "Hast thou the right to dispose of the life of thy Sister? Well, then, know that thou hast no more right to dispose of thy own. What is once given, is no longer thine." From that moment, she understood that the will of God was in that case irrevocable, and prayers for her cure futile. On another similar occasion, Our Lord said to her: "Must My will always yield to thine?" Discovering at the moment the sublime and incomprehensible perfection of that will, she became inflamed with a holy desire to see it accomplished on earth as it is in heaven, even should such accomplishment cost her the sacrifice of what was dearest to her. When urged to pray for prolongation of life for the dying Sister, she replied in words whose power cannot be expressed: "No, my God, no, I will not dispute Thy inscrutable designs."

When Our Lord was about to send a sudden and unexpected visitation of sickness, Sister Marie-Catherine used to be interiorly illuminated, that, by her prayers, she might obtain courage and resignation for those about to be so visited. "What is the matter with you?" she was asked one day by one of her companions who saw that she was looking rather sad. "What is the matter with me?" answered Sister Marie-Catherine, trying in vain to hide her emotion. "Our Lord has shown me that Sister N— will be taken suddenly ill, and I have seen what confusion there will be in her office on account of her absence. I have pleaded with Our Lord to avert the blow, but He is inflexible."—That same evening, Sister N— with no premonitory warning had a copious hemorrhage, which soon reduced her to a dying state. Her Superioress, fearing the worst, relieved her of her office, and thus Sister Marie-Catherine's prediction was fulfilled.

Extraordinary vocations call for extraordinary graces. In other words, at the point at which the creature has attained the highest gifts of nature and of grace from the divine liberality, she cannot execute works beyond them if God supports not by favors proportioned to the end proposed by His love. In order, then, to realize her mission in its fullest extent, it not unfrequently happened to Sister Marie-Catherine to receive a clear interior perception of the need of her Sisters, as well as enlightenment upon the act of charity which God called on her to make in their behalf. So distinct was her consciousness of their recourse to her that no distance could dull its sound. The angels were, on many occasions, the agents of these supernatural admonitions. "I am the light of the world," says Jesus Christ in the holy Gospel. Yes,

He alone is the focus, He alone is the spendor of light. Nevertheless, His designs are not always illuminated by Himself, for He is pleased often to effect certain providential missions by means of His angels, the ministers of His most holy will. These heavenly intelligences enlightened Sister Marie-Catherine by manifesting themselves under a human form. One day, she beheld an angel supporting and consoling a Sister whom she knew to be under the pressure of interior trial.

Thanks to the close communication established between her and those heavenly spirits, she was sometimes roused from sleep, and inspired to go where her services were required. We shall relate one such occurrence.

A Sister fainted during the night, on account of loss of blood from leeches that had been applied to her. Suddenly Sister Marie-Catherine felt interiorly urged to go to her. She did so without delay, and gave her the necessary attention. Another Sister had premonitory symptoms of indisposition, which would oblige her to remain in bed. She was worried at the thought of the increase of labor her absence would throw upon others, and she was trying to make an act of perfect abandonment to the will of God, when in walked Sister Marie-Catherine. She had been warned of the sick Sister's condition by her good angel. She rendered her prompt assistance, and left her only after having obtained from our Lord her radical cure.

A remedy, taken by another Sister one evening for an obstinate cough, had made her very sick. Knowing that a heavy dose of the medicine would prove fatal, she lay in great uneasiness, and unable to call for aid. With lively faith she turned to the good angel of Sister Marie-Catherine, and then abandoned herself to Almighty God.

Her prayer was hardly uttered, when she heard light footsteps coming toward her cell, the door opened, and Sister Marie-Catherine's sweet face met her gaze. It was like a vision from heaven. Next day, she accosted her with the words: "How did you know that I was in distress? How did you know that I wanted you?—at the dead of night, and you at so great a distance from me!"—"I heard an interior voice telling me that you needed me, and I arose and came to you," she said with all the simplicity of an answer to any ordinary question.

It was by no means rare to hear her say to a sick Sister: "You suffered a great deal last night corporally and spiritually. My good angel made it known to me, and urged me to pray for you." Admirable goodness of God, who places the princes of His court at the service of His humble servants!

CHAPTER XV.

Sister Marie-Catherine's Gift of Prayer.

Having spoken of Sister Marie-Catherine's charity, let us now examine into its source. She was endowed with the gift of prayer, even sublime prayer. It was in her intimate communications with her Divine Spouse that was enkindled the fire of holy love, whose vivifying influence radiated on all around her. The simplicity of her faith, the sincerity of her love for God, her total surrender of self to Him, the Author of her being, admirably disposed her for divine favors. Having no care apart from pleasing God, she thought and spoke and acted with a heart

elevated above any personal motive. She had but one intention, but one love, consequently, her flight to God was rapid. She acted with charming ingenuousness toward the sweet Friend of souls. Through an instinct of grace, she portrayed in her conduct these words of the Divine Master: "*If you do not become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.*" Ah, this is heaven upon earth! And the state of spiritual infancy,—is it not virtue consummated? It restores to the soul baptismal innocence with all its privileges. This was the secret of Sister Marie-Catherine's power over the Heart of Jesus. One might say that hers was the mission to charm and rejoice in by her innocent familiarity and the holy confidence of her love.

Our Lord seemed to smile at the childlike demonstrations of her tenderness. After she had gone as far as she dared, the God of goodness seemed to invite her to dare still more. "The soul that abandons itself," says St. Francis de Sales, "has nothing to do but remain in the arms of our dear Lord as a child on the bosom of its mother. When she puts it down on the ground to walk, it walks until its mother takes it up; and when she wishes to carry it, it allows her to do so. It knows not, it thinks not where it is going, but permits its mother to carry it whithersoever she pleases. 'Tis the same with this soul loving the will of the good pleasure of God in all that happens to it. It allows itself to be carried or to walk, nevertheless, doing carefully all that is the will of God signified." No doubts could have found entrance into the trusting soul of Sister Marie-Catherine had they not been suggested to her by her Superiors. Accustomed to identify herself with their sentiments, she became diffident of her own as soon as she, who was to her truly the or-

gan of the Holy Ghost, did not appear perfectly assured. Then began colloquies with Our Lord, in which were mingled tender and loving reproaches, such as, "Is it possible, my Lord, that Thou dost let the devil deceive me? What glory would that give Thee? Ah, well! I come to Thee, I, a poor, ignorant creature, and with the greatest confidence I ask Thee to let me know the truth. I trust in Thee. Surely, Thou wilt not let Thy enemy answer me with lies. Couldst Thou, my Jesus, see such a thing, and allow it? No, no, that could not be possible."—And Jesus, hearkening to her amorous complaints, soon restored peace of mind and joy of soul.

In proportion as conformity between the Heart of Jesus and that of His faithful Spouse was perfected, their union became more intimate. The Heart of God poured out Its thoughts, Its feelings, even Its Divinity into her heart. By a still more special privilege, He remained constantly before her eyes as a brilliant mirror of perfection, while her own heart ardently aspired to the light and love of the divine life. The more she received of the gifts of the Saviour, the greater became her capacity to receive. The familiar union that Our Lord deigned to contract with her pure and loving soul, His sweet condescension in communicating His secrets to her, astonished no one. The sovereign reason of the marvels that He operated in her, was love. We believe in this mystery of ineffable tenderness, and we know that in God love explains all, justifies all. If it is asked whence did this humble, uncultured religious draw thoughts so elevated, sentiments so noble; how was it that, at a single glance, irrespective of distance of space or time, she beheld before her the different scenes of our sacred mysteries; how was it that the future lay unveiled before her, discovering truths and events un-

known to others, we answer: She loved and was loved. Her love became so intense that she could scarcely support it. Her ardor knew no bounds when God, for some moments, dispelled the clouds that hid from her eyes His Adorable Face, upon which the Seraphim dare not look unveiled. It was rare for her to receive this favor without being ravished in ecstasy, the weakness of poor nature being unable to support the brilliancy of Almighty God's incomparable beauty, the sight of which makes the eternal joy of the saints, and which will one day be our own.

From this period, the life of Our Lord was unfolded before her eyes in pictures, which varied according to the seasons, and still more according to the trials that she had to undergo, or the virtues she was called upon to practise. The different scenes of His divine life were enacted under the eyes of her enraptured soul, as if taking place in the present, and without any premeditation on her part. "I do not apply to the mysteries of Our Lord according to my natural taste and desire," she said. "It is the good Saviour Himself who draws me to them by His will. My life," added she smiling, "is one continued representation of them."—"Do you not get tired?" asked her Superioress.—"No more tired than at opening my eyes to see you, Mother; for to open the eyes of my soul is the only active part that I take in this grace. Neither my memory nor imagination has anything to do with the pictures that I see, Our Lord presents Himself most frequently in a suffering state, giving me to understand that it is in that state that He is more abandoned by men. At other times, I follow the holy women from town to town through Judea, I witness Our Lord's miracles, and I listen to the words of life that fall from His

divine lips. I hide them away in my heart. I see His divine gestures, the beauty of which no words can depict. I am irresistibly captivated by the charm of His Sacred Humanity. I see the different places, as one sees objects reflected in a mirror, the rugged mountains, the borders of the Lake of Genesareth, the desert, and all their surroundings, as if I were really traversing those places. I see Our Saviour at Bethany, conversing with Lazarus and his sisters. There are few facts of the holy Gospel, of which I have not been witness. I have often followed Our Lord to the mountain whence the Pharisees wanted to cast Him down. The meek Saviour, invisible to all, was to me like the sun when the moon crosses its disc, and partly deprives us of light. Then I see Him reappear as soon as danger is past.”—Forgetful that others were not so highly privileged as herself, she would sometimes exclaim when listening to the description of Judea, the theatre of the public life and sufferings of the Saviour: “That is not altogether correct. There is something wanting to that detail; but things have changed since then.” The absorbing cares that sprang from her duties as aid to the infirmary and the refectory, duties that she discharged most faithfully and conscientiously, could not interrupt the course of Our Lord’s Life, the pictures of which were incessantly passing before her. “It is my soul’s world,” she used to say. “There I live notwithstanding all my efforts to withdraw from it.”—When questioned about her interior occupation while performing her varied duties, which claimed so much of her attention, she would answer: “It is always the same, Our Lord in His mysteries.”—“What!” retorted her Superioress, “does that go on even when you are surrounded by the children, and you are trying to amuse them?”—“O that is no distrac-

tion to me, because my interior occupation exacts no effort of the mind or the will. The exterior interferes with the interior no more than the interior affects the exterior. One aids and strengthens the other."

Sister Marie-Catherine was ever ready to devote herself to all kinds of labor, ever ready to meet the contradictions attendant upon her exceptional position; but never in the midst of her most rigorous trials could the faintest shadow of weariness or vexation be detected on her countenance. One of the truest marks of holiness is that sweet equanimity of temper that shows itself in the exterior demeanor. This mark Sister Marie-Catherine possessed. She was always beaming with joy. From childhood to advanced age, she retained unalterable cheerfulness. Was not this the best proof of her intimate union with Jesus Christ? Sometimes she would say to her Superioress: "Mother, I must resign myself, for I shall be young to the last. How can I help being a child with Our Lord, since He permits it? I beg His pardon, but I more frequently say to Him: 'My God it is Thy fault. Why art Thou so kind to Thy poor little Sister Marie-Catherine?'"

The work begun in contemplation was carried out in action, and that almost without her knowledge. She never had to resort to the little expedients made use of by souls less favored. To the question once asked her by one of her Superioresses: "Are you never tried by aridity?" she answered: "Mother, I do not understand in what that dryness consists. Please to explain it to me." The Superioress replied: "When the soul conversing with God, requires in her weakness the aid of good and holy thoughts that enlighten the mind and touch the heart, that is called the state of dryness. In this state, exercises of piety have no attraction, the practice of virtue is with-

out charm; the heart is like an arid field, parched and thirsting for the waters of holy love.”—“Mother,” replied Sister Marie-Catherine, “the one thought, that God and all the treasures of His grace belong to me, and that I belong to Him, that I am all His,—this suffices to make me feel in His presence a happiness that nothing can trouble. I have had moments of privation, but they were short and rare. During them, I instinctively felt as if Our Lord were near me, in the same room, or outside, the door ajar, or as if He were hiding behind a curtain. I seem to hear Him. But He never hides so completely that I cannot discover Him. My eyes, my ears, my heart, my whole being turn eagerly to find the one object of my love.”—Sometimes she might be heard complaining amorously: “Why dost Thou hide, my Jesus, and leave me sad? Art Thou not my only good on earth? Can I live without Thee? Have I displeased Thee that Thou goest away from me? Thou dost wait until I am worthy of Thee, alas! when wilt Thou come back?”—Then turning to Our Lady, she would beg her in the most suppliant terms to reinstate her in her Son’s good graces. The favor was soon granted. During such colloquies, she would at times cry aloud or utter words stamped with childlike simplicity. It was no rare thing to hear her exclaiming: “Art Thou still angry, my Jesus? Wilt Thou be so very long? I was very bad yesterday, I know, but today I did everything to satisfy Thee. Dost Thou not understand that I would rather die a thousand times than displease Thee ever so little? Wilt Thou not pardon poor Sister Marie-Catherine? She will not rise until Thou dost promise to do so? Thou sayest yes, dost Thou not?”

Her love for Our Lord betrayed itself in words of tender

simplicity, which increased till her death. It marked all her communications with Him, and in them shone, also, that abandonment and confidence of an age that dares everything, because it knows itself loved. If simple souls are generally the objects of the most astonishing of God's favors, it is because such souls have more humility, the childlike spirit being the surest antidote against vain-glory. What can the soul that reposes in the Heart of her God and acts only by His divine impulse, attribute to self? There is, on the contrary, so much natural satisfaction in courageously and energetically crushing powerful enemies, there are so many charms in the exercise of spiritual heroism, that the snare of vain-glory is hard to escape. It is certain that the humble soul attracts the divine complacency; and because she ignores self, she receives those caresses which only they who have experienced them can understand. The smallest details of everyday life were never regarded by Sister Marie-Catherine as too insignificant to exclude the kind intervention of her Lord. Did she lose her thimble, her scissors, or any similar article, she would exclaim: "Thou seest, my God, that I am wasting my time in this search. Thou knowest where it is. Please let me find it," and rising forthwith, she would go, as if by instinct, and lay her hand on the missing object. Then she would say with charming ingenuousness, "O but Thou art good, my Jesus! And to think that there are souls on earth who doubt Thy goodness!" One evening, the Sister Portress, unable to find the key of the parlor, reproved Sister Marie-Catherine for mislaying it. The latter assured her that she would hunt it. As usual, she turned to her customary resource in time of trouble, and soon returned to the portress, saying, "The key is behind,"

naming a piece of furniture in the Procuratrix room, "where it accidentally fell." The key was found in the spot indicated.

For words and actions seemingly the most innocent or indifferent, Sister Marie-Catherine asked Our Lord's permission. She could discover at a glance the least shade of imperfection in the intentions that animated her: "Thou dost not want that, my good Jesus," she would say, "then neither do I," and her own inclination was instantly sacrificed. Was it necessary to decide between two actions that would give equal glory to Almighty God, though of a different order, she would recollect herself an instant, turn to God with the simplicity of a child, and say: "My Jesus, please to let me know Thy will." If the inspiration was slow in coming, she would exclaim: "Thou dost not deign to answer me, my Jesus. Thou dost keep silence, as if playing with my perplexity." Then she would resolutely decide on what course to take, saying, "Very well! I shall do what seems best; but if I am wrong, Thou art to blame, my good Jesus."

If called from one unfinished duty to begin another, she used to exclaim: "My God, I abandon all to Thee that Thou mayest take care of all. It is always thus. Thy desires are ever mine." One day, while preparing breakfast for the pupils, the hour for Holy Communion approached. The range was red-hot, the chocolate briskly boiling. With her wonted simplicity, she addressed Our Lord: "What shall I do? O Jesus, I leave all to Thy care. I know that all will turn out as Thou dost will." Fixing her mind on the greatness of the Sacrament, she put aside every other thought. On her return to the kitchen, she found, to her surprise, the pipes thrown down and lying on the floor, but the range intact, and the chocolate

ready to be served. Jesus had responded to the confidence of His faithful servant. Again, when her efforts to kindle the fire before going to the choir were unsuccessful, she would say to Our Lord: "Dear Jesus, I have done all in my power, but without success. Let me depend upon Thy kindness for what is wanting. I hear a voice calling me. I must go." She went, and Our Lord condescended to the simplest details of her humble duties. Thus she practically experienced His excessive love for the pure soul, *His beloved among thousands*, the object of His special predilection.

From the first years of her religious life, this "true daughter of celestial colloquies," complained to her Mistress of Novices of not knowing how to make mental prayer, and begged her for instruction in that holy exercise. The Mistress was too experienced in the ways of God not to abandon to the Holy Spirit the guidance of the privileged soul under her charge. She understood that the familiarity that puts the heart of the creature in direct communication with the Heart of the Creator, assuring to the latter absolute dominion, was of all prayer the most excellent. But her admiration for the holy caresses and liberties allowed the faithful soul she took good care to conceal, even simulating ignorance on the subject, in order to humble her novice.

The desire to know how to make mental prayer, Sister Marie-Catherine felt till the end of her days. Once as she was expressing it more vehemently than usual, her Superioress said to her: "Sister, you must renounce that craving. It would be labor lost to try to teach you. You will never succeed."—"Why, Mother?" asked the humble Sister.—"Because to make prayer well, we must know, after having spoken to God, how to be silent and

listen, and of that you will never be capable.” —“Drooping her head sadly, Sister Marie-Catherine replied: “That is true, Mother, I can never be silent in Our Lord’s presence. The time always appears too short for all that I have to say. Once I begin to speak, I know not how to stop. But it is not merely words, it is true rapture.” —“How did you pass the time of prayer today?” asked the Superioress.—“When I entered the choir,” answered Sister Marie-Catherine, “I prostrated myself in spirit before Our Lord and, in sentiments of deep annihilation and love, I kissed His feet. Then I heard His voice saying to me: ‘Kiss also, My side.’—I obeyed in transport. Our Lord then opened His Divine Heart to me, made me enter It, and disclosed to me the infinite perfections It contains. O what I there beheld! How can we think that all that is ours, and not die of love! Are you astonished, Mother, after all these proofs of the love of my Jesus, that I am forced to tell Him that I love Him? My heart, overflowing as it is with love, must give vent to it in words. I cannot be silent, I should choke if I were.” —To suppress her transports was utterly impossible; consequently, she sought solitude in order to give free vent to the ardor that consumed her, and that escaped from her heart in sudden cries and rapturous words, such as, “O Jesus! to love Thee! O Jesus, to live for Thee! to suffer for Thee! to die for Thee!”

It frequently happened, however, that Our Lord invited her to remain silent, and then He deigned to impart to her understanding divine wisdom in so exalted a manner that she could not receive it without falling at once into ecstasy. On one such occasion, she was deprived of the use of her senses for over an hour. When she returned to consciousness, and was questioned as to what

had passed, she answered: "Our Lord was pleased to treat me as His humble disciple. He discovered to me the deep and hidden sense of these words of St. Paul: '*I live; no, not I, but Christ liveth in me.*'—"But," added she modestly, "what I understood, Our Lord does not, doubtless, wish me to communicate, for words fail to express it. Ah, the life of Jesus in the soul! If we only knew what it is, and the wonders that it operates therein, what would we not do to increase so great a good!"

Sometimes she would complain of her inability to read. "I begin," said she, "with great good will, but if I come across the name of Our Lord, or any incident relating to Him, I am gone."—"And where do you go?" some one asked her.—"To Judea. There I see His actions, I hear His words. Today I saw Him at Jacob's well, conversing with the Samaritan woman, and there was such sweetness in His words that it seemed to me impossible to resist them. Ah, my Jesus, if men knew the beauty of Thy countenance, the majesty of Thy person! If Thou wouldst show Thyself to all men just as Thou art, who could resist Thee? who would not love Thee?" Then, in her humility, she would say: "Our Lord knows well that my mind is incapable of consideration. That is the reason that He deals with me as He does. Sometimes I fear that I have not fulfilled the obligation of making my half-hour's reading, but then I am told that I could not do better than yield obedience to the Holy Spirit. God is so good that He will be satisfied with my efforts."—In her old age, when receiving at the New Year her spiritual reading-book from the hand of the Superioress, she said, pointing with her finger to one, "O how good that is! I love it."—"Do you understand it?" asked the Superioress.—"No,

but I *feel* an interior movement, which attracts me to it." It was the *Canticle of Canticles*.

CHAPTER XVI.

Sister Marie-Catherine's Holy Communion.

In Holy Communion, Jesus effected in Sister Marie-Catherine's soul a complete annihilation of self. Finding her heart pure and generous, entirely under the sway of His love, He continued in her His Eucharistic Sacrifice, uniting her by ineffable sufferings to His own uninterrupted immolation in the tabernacle, and causing her, as far as human weakness would permit, to enter into the mystery of divine transformation.

A similar marvel was physically effected at the moment of Holy Communion. We saw the favor visibly and frequently repeated. As the hour approached to receive, we beheld her freed from her supernatural sufferings, and passing almost instantaneously from symptoms of agony to her ordinary state of health. In consequence of this oft-repeated restoration, we were able to calculate with certainty the duration of her pains. Not once during the long term of forty years was she debarred from receiving Holy Communion on account of her health. When approaching the Holy Table, she was often so weak as to seem wholly unable to reach it; but after receiving and hearing Our Lord's words: "Why didst thou fear? Am I not the Bread of the strong?" she would suddenly become so active and vigorous as to astonish those that a few moments previously had seen her languishing like

one about to die. When they afterward expressed surprise at what they had seen, she would reply with a gracious smile: "*It is not I who live. It is Jesus Christ who lives in me.*"

Sometimes an irresistible attraction drew her to the altar. From early morning she felt in her members a strength and vigor to which she was usually a stranger. She was, according to her own way of expressing it, lifted up and borne, as it were, to her Jesus by a power far above nature. Her soul sprang toward her Treasure, and Our Lord seemed to dart toward her, as if hastening the movements of the priest who was to communicate her.

At a certain period of her life, Sister Marie-Catherine was attacked by a complication of pains as strange as they were severe. Her sufferings reached such a point that we thought her last hour had surely come. The fever that consumed her was so violent as to bring on delirium, and we thought every moment she would suffocate. The whole night was passed in this way. Next morning, the Superioress visited her before the hour for meditation, and thus addressed her: "Although I think it humanly impossible for you to go to the choir for Holy Communion, yet I do not forbid you to do so. I abandon you to the care of Our Lord."—"Mother," replied the sick Sister, "I cannot go. It is impossible!" and she fell back on the bed in her effort to rise.—"Nevertheless," she said to us later, "I heard in the depths of my soul the voice of Our Lord, saying to me, 'My daughter, come to Me!'"—But I was unable to make the least movement in answer to His call. At last, I heard another invitation more pressing than the first: 'My daughter, come to Me! Fear nothing.'—I arose without effort, and quickly directed my steps to the choir, experiencing naught

of my past sufferings. But I had hardly returned to the infirmary before back they all came. Filled with the tenderest gratitude for Our Lord, I would have wished to be dissolved for Him, in order to testify to Him my love. 'Ah, yes! I feel it! You have a weakness for me, my dear Jesus,' I said to Him, "though I do not understand why. But it is so. You must surely have a weakness for poor Sister Marie-Catherine.'"

So ardent was the desire of Our Lord to unite Himself to this privileged soul that one day, during her thanksgiving, He presented Himself before her, saying with an accent of ineffable tenderness: "In the absence of a priest, I shall come Myself, and communicate thee." The demon, jealous of the marvellous increase of grace that she received in Holy Communion, exerted all his machinations to prevent it. At the moment in which she should go to the choir, he raised unforeseen obstacles or sudden pains, reasons apparently sufficient to compel her to abstain from receiving. One day, the acute pain in her feet prevented her taking one step. She could not even put her foot to the ground. But what did she do? Losing no time in idle deliberation, she crawled on her hands and knees to the choir, a long distance from her room. But arrived there, it was in vain that she tried to open the door of the anti-choir. It resisted every effort. What should she do? At last, she heard the well-known voice of her Master: "Pass through the Sacred Heart cloister." This was a longer way than the other, but could any difficulty arrest her? Thinking only of the Object of her desires, she eagerly and joyfully cleared the distance that separated her from her Jesus. On reaching the choir, her pains suddenly vanished, and she remained in peaceful possession of her Eucharistic Treasure.

For many years, Sister Marie-Catherine passed her nights in continual prayer. She indemnified herself for the restraints of the day by amorous colloquies with her God hidden in the tabernacle. In her insatiable hunger for the Celestial Food, the hours passed all too slowly for her ardent longings. Sometimes a tapping on the window-pane, or a strain of sweet music threw her into holy delirium. "Ah! my Jesus, is it Thou?" she would cry out. "My heart recognizes Thee. It cannot be deceived. O my Beloved, *looking through the lattices!*" Then she would entone hymns of her own composition, for her love awoke poetic fires in her bosom. "I can still hear Sister Marie-Catherine's voice," writes a former pupil, "singing sweetly, as if in answer to invisible angels. What an effort I had to make to distract her from that heavenly concert when, overcome by fear, I cried out: 'Sister Marie-Catherine, you are singing!'—'Be quiet, my child,' she would say to me, 'be quiet!'"—Another of our pupils, who had been for a long time an inmate of the infirmary, wrote to us: "The hymns that Sister Marie-Catherine sang during the night, seemed not of earth. I felt myself in a supernatural atmosphere and, impressed with that fear which results from things out of the ordinary course, I have often cried out, 'Sister Marie-Catherine, you are singing, and it sounds most unearthly.'—'Go to sleep,' she would say, 'and dream no more.'"—A profound silence frequently succeeded these transports, her hands grew cold, and she would lie unconscious for hours. A Sister who shared her cell one winter relates that, going on a certain evening to Sister Marie-Catherine's bedside, she heard her pouring out her heart in inflamed words, such as these: "See, see! 'Tis my Jesus! Ah, how beautiful He is!"—The words

died upon her lips, her body became inanimate, her senses suspended, and her soul, ravished at the sight of the glorified Humanity of Our Lord, was entirely abysed in the joy of the divine union. The rapture lasted a whole hour, during which the hand of her companion, which she had seized at the moment of the divine transport, could not be wrested from her grasp.

She received whilst in ecstasy the knowledge of admirable truths. "I find nothing in books," she used to say in her simplicity, "that Our Lord has not already made known to me."—Sublime truths were communicated to her soul almost without her knowledge. She felt that they had penetrated her being, that she fully possessed them, although she was utterly unable to say how it had been effected. For several years, the name of God, or a word relating to Him uttered in her hearing or met in a book, sufficed to throw her into ecstasy. Intrusted with numerous duties at the boarding-school, it was necessary to appoint another Sister to be continually with her both to withdraw her from the gaze of the pupils while under the divine action, and to supply her place when prevented by ecstasy from fulfilling her duties. But it was impossible to screen her entirely from the curious gaze of the children. Despite the most active vigilance, there were moments of surprise, which the giddy girls put to profit, in order to assure themselves whether her extraordinary favors were proof against fire. They often held a lighted taper to her face, without, however, being able to withdraw her from her mystic sleep, or make her give the least sign of pain.

During the too short moments of thanksgiving, seeing her in the attitude of adoration, immovable as a statue, one might really believe that she belonged not to earth.

While in ecstasy and unconscious of the flight of time, hours appeared to her as so many minutes, and a Sister was obliged to remain near her to discover when the divine favor granted her was at an end. When returned to self, she was like one that had fallen from a region of light into the midst of the obscurities of our sad world. Her countenance was expressive of sorrowful surprise and silent admiration, and she found it a necessity to give vent in broken words or fervent aspirations to the divers feelings that oppressed her.

When the Sacred Humanity, piercing the veil of the Sacred Host, showed Itself to her glorious and brilliant in beauty, faith disappeared, and the Beatific Vision seemed already begun. "Then it was," did she say, "that annihilation appeared easy. The soul that enjoys this favor, measures the distance that separates her from her God, and longs for an abyss to open beneath her feet, that she may plunge into it. To annihilate self, is all that I can do when my Saviour loads me with His kindness, the excess of which I am unable to support." "It often happened," she once said, "that after Holy Communion Our Lord discovered to me His divine attributes. I, poor, miserable, little creature, how could I support so much glory! I should have wished to annihilate my being, but not having the power to do so, I sought refuge in His bounty, that one of His perfections most in accordance with my own weakness." The Divine Saviour appeared to her one day seated in her heart as on a throne, and overwhelmed her with the delights of His love. He gave her so sweet an assurance of His predilection that her soul longed for heaven, and she felt impelled to speak only of death, which would put her in possession of her Sovereign Good.

The sacramental union, ineffable gift of the tenderness of Jesus Christ, was for Sister Marie-Catherine more than union consummated by faith. The shadows disappearing, it was permitted her to contemplate the dazzling light of the Sun of Justice. However close and rapturous the act of Holy Communion may be, it is transitory, it lasts but a few moments; and Sister Marie-Catherine's love aspired to eternal union. Every morning, it is true, the "Manna of the desert" was given her for spiritual nourishment. Our Lord had promised It to her as a compensation for her prolonged exile; and He graciously assured her that the day upon which she would be unable to go to the choir to communicate, would be her last on earth. O how many pressing supplications, how many invitations, how many loving appeals did she pour forth to Him, her only Love! These longings were the support of her existence. The interval between the Communion of today and that of tomorrow was one of amorous desire, of intense yearning.

Sister Marie-Catherine's lively faith in the Holy Eucharist revealed to her the divine life drawn from Its source; and from that source flowed copious streams of grace, permeating the smallest actions of her life, and filling them with the Spirit of God. In answer to a question as to the effects of the Blessed Sacrament in her soul, she said: "When Our Lord enters my soul in Holy Communion, I know not what particular part He occupies, for I feel that He possesses my whole being." The attraction for the Sacred Banquet was not for her an isolated act of the day, nor did it end with the reception of the Bread of Life. It was an integral part of her life, it was her holiness, her joy. To live by the Sacred Host, was to undergo Its holy action, to deliver herself entirely to

It, and in union with Jesus and in imitation of Him, to abandon herself entirely to His Father and His will. The love of the Divine Spouse for her was shown by sacrifice: her love for Him must take no other form. To say to God in words, "I love Thee," was not enough for Sister Marie-Catherine's generous soul; she felt the need to prove her love by becoming a victim with and for her Jesus. The genuine fruit of her devotion to the Holy Eucharist was the spirit of immolation. To a Sister who spoke to her of a painful trial that she was undergoing, she replied. "Sister, you must make up your mind to bear it. You have to suffer, and that till your death. You have the happiness to receive *Jesus-Victim* too frequently not to have your soul marked by Him with the seal of victim. To desire Holy Communion, is to invite suffering. When it overtakes you, abandon yourself to it without a thought of self."

In her intimate communications with God, she was deeply penetrated with this thought of faith that, identifying herself with the death of the Saviour by the Sacrament of Love, she was to consent to His reproducing in her the mysteries of His unparalleled sufferings. It was for the Saviour alone to place limits to them, His supreme jealousy calling for nothing short of supreme immolation. "*My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" A certain Sister, having abandoned herself to God in all the sincerity and uprightness of her heart, was taken at her word. Attacked in the delicate fibres of her nature, she bore the trial with pain and, trembling at her own weakness, she begged Sister Marie-Catherine to obtain for her the generous fidelity demanded by Almighty God. For an instant, Sister Marie-Catherine recollected herself, and then replied: "I pray for you every day, and every

day the same answer of death is heard in my soul: ‘ *The time that I grant her must be filled up by suffering. She must expect nothing else. I have great designs of love upon her, and through suffering alone can they be carried into effect. She must allow Me to act.* ’ ” — “Courage, my dear Sister,” she would sometimes say with a smile on meeting this Sister “to you and to me there remains only suffering. But eternity is coming. O eternity!” — and her countenance would beam with joy. On a certain feast of the Presentation, Sister Marie-Catherine asked Our Lord to perfect His work in this Sister, and He replied: “ *I will do so, but it will be by hard trials.* ”

Sister Marie-Catherine placed no bounds to the divine good pleasure, and to it she limited all her desires; consequently, she advanced calmly and serenely, blessing God in all things. “Forgetfulness of self is the tomb of scruples.” How could these pests of the spiritual life exist in Sister Marie-Catherine, since there was nothing in her to nourish them? She knew nothing of them. There was no narrowness in her conscience, no discouragement in her soul, but only that lively faith in the divine mercy, in which she abysed all her miseries. Her perfect abandonment to God in all things, gave her the liberty of the children of God. She walked in largeness of heart in the simple way of unity, which led her straight to Him. “Where the Spirit of God is, there also is joy, and there also a rapid flight toward sanctity.”

As we have learned, the way of Sister Marie-Catherine was one of confidence, a confidence, however, that did not always free her entirely from delicate qualms of conscience when approaching Holy Communion. She felt urged to detest and avoid not only those faults inherent to human weakness, but also those omissions in the love and grati-

tude that she owed to God. Among all supernatural privileges, that of having been preserved from the least stains of sin appeared to her the most enviable. She longed for the transformation of her soul under the eye of God, until it should become like unto a polished mirror, in which He would love to contemplate His image. "God is so pure!" she would frequently exclaim. "He discovers stains in the angels themselves!" She knew that He reveals Himself to the detached soul, penetrating its inmost recesses as a ray of light. Our Lord was pleased to give her the understanding of this truth in a most perfect manner.

He deigned to appear to her seated on a throne in the centre of a soul, over whose powers He supremely reigned. On one side was a bunch of lilies, on the other one of roses, symbolic of purity and love. "The degree of that purity was shown me," said she. "I saw that it embraced the smallest details of our life, even our passing thoughts, our almost imperceptible feelings. I was frightened at the difficulty of attaining such purity, but I was told that its practice, so far above the strength of our poor nature, would become sweet and easy with the help of love. I heard the same divine teaching after Holy Communion." Our Lord manifested to her the purity demanded from so privileged a spouse. "I had need," she said, "to be strengthened by my good Master, in order to be able to support what I saw. Pointing to another Sister who had communicated, also, He said: '*I desire that that soul become as pure as thine.*'" It was especially during the precious moments of thanksgiving that Sister Marie-Catherine was favored with supernatural illumination. By the light of the Sun of Justice, she discovered the will of God in the most delicate, the most

perplexing questions. She saw clearly the result of an undertaking, for instance, the issue of a sickness, or the bent of a vocation.

One day, being urged by an interior impulse after Holy Communion, she went in search of her Superioress and, without preamble or ceremony, addressed her: "Mother, Our Lord made known to me that He does not want you to receive that Protestant into the convent. A young man, furious at her determination, is resolved to set fire to it if she is admitted."—"Of what are you talking?" exclaimed the Superioress. "There is no question of receiving a converted Protestant either as a postulant or as a scholar."—"Then I have made a mistake, Mother," and with further words, she returned to her duties. Some hours later, the Superioress sent for her, and told her that she had lost sight of the fact, that Mlle. de Flavigney (an Aggregate Sister) had informed her that morning that she had engaged the services of a young Protestant recently received into the Church, and that she had done so with the view of strengthening her in the Faith. "Well, Mother," said Sister Marie-Catherine quickly, "do not allow her to come, for Our Lord does not wish it." The young girl was, in consequence, sent away when she presented herself. Here is another instance of her knowledge of persons, gained from a supernatural source. One of our novices appeared to be possessed of rare qualities of mind and heart. She was thoroughly educated, was possessed of great energy of will, and was a model of regularity to every exercise. The Community regarded her, in consequence, as a subject of great hope for the future. But Sister Marie-Catherine's opinion, formed from what she was given to see supernaturally, was very different. Following an injunction from Our Lord, she

addressed her Superioress on the subject: "Mother, all efforts to form Sister M. N— to our holy observances will be useless. God has not given her a place among us."—Some weeks later, and contrary to all indications, her words were realized. The novice, although received by the Chapter for her profession, left the convent, not being able to bind herself to the practice of that humility and simplicity of spirit demanded by our Constitutions. Another, a postulant, was wavering in her vocation. The Mistress of Novices begged Sister Marie-Catherine to offer a Holy Communion for her, that she might be enlightened as to His will in regard to the poor child, who was being drawn in two opposite directions. Sister Marie-Catherine offered the Communion, as requested, and then informed the good Mistress that Our Lord had manifested to her that the postulant in question was a chosen soul, called by Him to holy religion, but that she wished not to correspond to the designs of His love, and that she was determined to leave no means untried to persuade herself that she had no vocation. "She acts thus to escape her remorse, but in vain. Remorse will pursue her despite her efforts to escape it." These words were literally verified.

Our Lord once appeared to Sister Marie-Catherine during Holy Mass, His countenance wearing a look of severity. In vain did she try to discover the cause. The Divine Master did not deign to reveal it. But what grief for His faithful servant to know that in a place consecrated to the Real Presence of the Saviour, at the very moment of His Sacrifice, there was an ungrateful, an unfaithful creature, who incurred His indignation! At last, vanquished by the persevering supplications of His Spouse, Jesus revealed to her the interior dispositions of one of

the pupils, whom He named. Sister Marie-Catherine made all known to her Superioress who, before taking any decisive step, did what she could to remedy the evil. Not being successful, however, she was obliged to send the young girl home.

Sometimes it pleased Our Lord to communicate with Sister Marie-Catherine in parables, whose mysterious sense was not always revealed to her at once. On such occasions, she ingenuously complained to Him in such words as the following: "My God, I tell Thee all that I think, and just as I think, clearly and simply. Why dost Thou speak to me in parables? Dost Thou forget that I am too ignorant to understand such language? Please, my dear God, to answer me frankly and without mystery."

CHAPTER XVII.

Sister Marie-Catherine's Devotions.

First among Sister Marie-Catherine's special devotions was that to the Blessed Sacrament, the Sun of her life. To It she owed the fruitfulness of her prayer, the marrow of her renunciation, the simplicity of her communication with God, and her ever-overflowing spiritual joy. Toward Jesus hidden under the Eucharistic veil, she was borne not only by the inclination of her heart, but still more by a secret, though very sensible, attraction of the Holy Spirit. Whether she was pouring out her soul at the feet of Jesus, or interposing herself between His justice and sinners, the living and adorable Presence of

“Our Emmanuel with us,” dominated in her every other feeling. Once, when rendering an account of a signal favor received from the Divine Majesty, she described in glowing words the rays which, darting from the Sacred Heart as from their focus to her own, had enkindled so burning a love as almost to consume her. And yet it was sometimes said to her; “The Sacred Heart does not hold the first place in your devotions.” To which she would reply: “My special devotion is to the Sacred Humanity in Its entirety. I know not how to restrict myself to that part of Him which is the symbol of love.”

Sister Marie-Catherine’s highest happiness was, to find herself alone in the presence of the Most Adorable Sacrament. She then felt at liberty to pour out her soul to Him. There she became oblivious of all things. She saw but Jesus, the one object of her love. All that the vehemence of love could suggest was poured out before Him. Hours sped rapidly amid the transports of such union. Sometimes it was necessary to recall her to earth, by forcing her to descend from heights to which the angelic spirits are elevated. Whatever might be her trials, in presence of the Blessed Sacrament they melted away like mist under the rays of the noonday sun. “I go to the choir to weep at the feet of Jesus,” she would say, “but when I find myself before Him, I lose sight of my trouble. The happiness of being His and of possessing Him, fills my heart with overflowing love. Ah! why, my God, must I still think of earth, be saddened by its chagrins, or rejoice in its joys, since my heart does not suffice to love Thee, my Love and my All!” She uttered these words with an expression of countenance that words cannot depict. “No, no,” she would sigh, “my eyes shall shed tears only over the outrages offered

to Thee! Ah, how I regret those shed for any other cause!"

She could not contemplate without sorrow the indifference of worldlings toward the Holy Eucharist, nor understand the coldness manifested toward It. Her heart was crushed when she heard proceeding from the tabernacle the bitter complaint: "I am persecuted in the Sacrament of Love. Behold how they cover Me with ignominy, as if determined to annihilate My name!" She passed entire nights bewailing man's ingratitude, and fervently imploring for the whole world that lively faith which would inspire them to believe what they saw not. To indemnify Jesus for such treatment, she would appeal to the Seraphim, to the whole celestial court, and unite her own to their burning ardor. When she thought herself alone, she would pray aloud: "O my Jesus, why dost Thou shut Thyself away in Thy prison of love? Why dost Thou hide from our gaze? Come forth from Thy tabernacle, I conjure Thee. Show Thyself to sinners, and they will be converted. Do not show Thyself to me, for I have no need of it to love Thee; but show Thyself to those that love Thee not, because they know Thee not. If they but once beheld Thy beauty, Thy infinite amiability, they would fall at Thy feet. Answer me, dear Jesus, if Thou please. Thy poor Sister Marie-Catherine will not rise from her knees until Thou listen to her."

In her intimate communications with Jesus, the true Sun of her soul, she formed around Him a cortège of honor made up of all her other devotions, namely, those to Our Blessed Lady, to the angels, and to the saints. It is impossible to know Jesus, much less to love Him, without rendering special homage to His Immaculate

Mother. Sister Marie-Catherine was too well instructed to ignore that truth. Her devotion to Mary was an integral part of her devotion to Jesus, and she clothed it with the same character of simplicity. She was favored with frequent visions of the Blessed Virgin, especially in her moments of greatest trial and interior pain. It was granted her one day to see Our Blessed Lady hovering above some buildings near our convent and, at a time when there was no thought of establishing there a Carmelite Community. Transported with love, she called to a servant-girl in one of the neighboring rooms, "Sophie! Sophie! come, come and see Blessed Lady!"—The girl flew to the spot, stretched her eyes, rubbed them with her hands, but saw nothing remarkable. "Sister, where is she? I can see nothing."—"Ah!" responded Sister Marie-Catherine, not thinking it a personal favor, "Doubtless, I am deceived."

Her confidence in the intercession of Mary was full of the boldness of holy faith. She often called upon her for assistance in her numerous and conflicting duties. When, in consideration of her age and infirmities, she was relieved in part of her laborious functions, her zeal was restricted to the care of the infirmary and boarding-school. Every morning, she visited the oratories, statues, and pictures dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. "I cannot begin to enumerate all the graces flowing from this practice," she would say. "Everything that my heart holds dear, I commend to this good Mother: souls, the spiritual and temporal interests of my dear Community, and I do not cease until I feel that I have been heard."—"And what prayers do you say, Sister Marie-Catherine?" "Why, I talk to her just as a child would talk to its mother. I have no idea of what I am going to say until I begin." When disease

took from her the use of her limbs, she utilized her long hours of sleeplessness in making the same pilgrimage in spirit.

Mary's invisible, though sensible, presence took possession of her soul from time to time. She tells us of this: "For three days the invisible presence of Mary hovered continually around me, and that with so much spiritual consolation to my soul that I asked myself whether I was still on earth. I received clear light on the grace of suffering, the esteem in which I should hold it, and I understood that the rest of my days should be full of it. But this knowledge brought me no terrors. I felt within myself something of the strength vouchsafed to martyrs, and the most severe tortures then appeared to me like a gentle relief from ordinary suffering." Such was the impression that generally heralded every divine favor. In the course of our narrative, we shall often have occasion to repeat our declaration, in order to prove this characteristic grace in the faithful servant of the Lord.

After the Mother of God, her good angel was the object of her tender devotion. She consulted him in many circumstances, as also the guardian angels of those with whom she had dealings, and we saw on more than one occasion with what signal help this intervention was followed. She loved all the saints, and she composed a Litany of those to whom she had special devotion; but to the holy Founders of her Order was given the legitimate preference. Were they not the instruments of whom Almighty God had made use to further her happiness? Were they not the channels of the holy joy that inundated her heart? The numerous means that they have left us to extend in our soul the reign of love, fed her filial piety toward them. That piety was portrayed by a constant

fidelity to imbibe their spirit. Still it was evident that a certain similitude in the spiritual way led her to confide more especially in her holy Founder. The marked favors that she invariably received on his feast, contributed to strengthen it. We shall here give some of them. Once, instead of the ostensorium on the altar, she beheld the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord. From His breast and hands darted rays which rested upon the Community, some Sisters receiving jets of light, others a single ray, all according to their actual dispositions. On another feast of St. Francis de Sales, Sister Marie-Catherine saw Our Lord going around the choir and blessing each Sister's place, even the vacant places of those that were absent in obedience. One stall received no blessing. Astonished at the sight, Sister Marie-Catherine asked why that was. Our Lord deigned to answer: "*It is because that soul does not give herself to me without reserve.*"

Again, she beheld St. Francis de Sales upon a throne, brilliant with light, and environed with glory. St. de Chantal was at his side, a large number of religious forming a semi-circle around the two saints. "I knew that an imposing scene was about to take place," said she, "so I remained in humble expectation. Presently, two Sisters, unknown to me, entered. St. Francis de Sales looked at them with a stern countenance, and then turned his face away with a gesture of his hand, as if repulsing them." This action of the gentle saint left an ineffaceable impression on Sister Marie-Catherine. She understood from it that he would be the accuser of his daughters, if they walked not with constant fidelity in the way marked out for them in the Rules and Constitutions of the Order. Finally, in 1873, January 29th, she saw Our Lord under the form of a lamb, reposing on the seven-sealed Book,

as depicted by St. John in the Apocalypse. There issued from His throne a multitude of small luminous bodies of various colors, so dazzling that no words can express their brilliancy. Magnificent clusters of light rested on St. Francis de Sales who on his knees, his arms extended, appeared transfigured in the splendor of glory. From his hands, as from a fountain, flowed rivulets of grace, which fell upon the whole Institute. "Ah!" exclaimed Sister Marie-Catherine, "if we only knew what God wishes this true father of our souls to be to the Visitation, and with what power he is invested to serve the Institute, how great would be our filial eagerness to recur to him in our needs!"

Persuaded, as she was, that our holy Founders receive from God grace to diffuse over the whole Order, she had recourse to them as to an over-flowing source, drawing therefrom not alone for her own personal wants, but for those of their great family, which she loved so tenderly. Once, on the feast of St. Chantal, she begged the venerated Foundress to watch over the preservation of the primitive spirit of the Visitation Order. Four convents were shown her as being in particular need of her prayers, in consequence of which, her supplications became especially earnest for them.

The ecclesiastical cycle with its various feasts formed a kind of spiritual parterre, from which her soul drank in true delight. As we have understood, when speaking of her manner of prayer, she passed successively from the joyful to the sorrowful or glorious mysteries without effort or constraint. Diversity was on the surface, but unity formed the foundation. But all the various forms of her piety were but the expansion of the attraction that ruled all others, namely, her devotion to the Adorable

Person of Jesus Christ. She never separated the contemplation of His Humanity from His Divinity.

On the feast of the Transfiguration, for instance, with Peter, James, and John, the three favorite disciples of Our Lord, she directed her steps toward the mountain, following with them the steep ascent that led to its summit. Suddenly, the minor details of persons and all their surroundings vanished from her astonished gaze, and the Face of Our Lord became before her brilliant as the sun. Ravished by the splendor that environed her Divine Master, and radiated from Him on all sides, she was inundated with heavenly joy, which raised her above the earth. In a half-recumbent posture, her arms extended, in holy amazement and admiration, she reproduced in her attitude that of the Apostles as represented in the holy Gospels.

On Holy Thursday, with the same Apostles, she ascended Mount Olivet, where the last effusions of Jesus' tenderness touched her deeply. Arriving at the grotto of Gethsemani, she cast herself, on her knees near Our Lord, overcome by grief at the sight of His dereliction. She wept, she sighed over His anguish, she offered herself with the Holy Victim to disarm the Justice of His Father. United with Him under the action of that divine attribute, her participation was so real that a sweat of blood bathed her face, while her whole exterior manifested her interior agony.

Beholding her innocent Jesus expiating in His person the outrages perpetrated against the Sovereign Majesty, and redeeming the world through the fathomless depths of His love, the need of suffering like Him, with Him, and for Him, became the burning desire of her faithful soul. Her sorrows, great as the sea, were for His divine

soul the source of ineffable consolation, refreshment, and sweetness. In that perfect charity which united her to her Crucified Spouse, she imbibed the twofold sentiment found in almost every saint similarly favored, namely, an excess of joy and an excess of sorrow.

For many years, the supernatural state was the ordinary one for Sister Marie-Catherine. Her raptures and ecstasies over, she was plunged into mortal agony, as if the former were but to prelude the latter. Thabor was nigh to Calvary, and if with the Apostles, she said, "It is good to be here," she did not fail to add, "Let us go and die with Him."

As the feasts of the Church came round, Sister Marie-Catherine always found new nourishment for her devotion, her lively faith inclining her to attach the greatest importance to the smallest ceremonies. They were for her the language of the heart. Our Lord delighted in revealing to her their true signification and beneficent efficacy. To see her make the sign of the Cross, was to be penetrated and impressed with the mystery that she was honoring. Her demeanor during prayer recalled that of the adoring angels that ornament our sanctuaries, and nothing seemed possible to disturb her recollection. "Her appearance," said one of the Sisters, "was to me a prayer." The day of the consecration of our church, the Divine Master instructed her in the mystical sense of the rites performed, and of their analogy to the Sacrament of Baptism, a Sacrament that consecrates the soul, and makes it the living temple of the Holy Ghost. "No human words can express," said she, "the magnificence of this interior temple, the jealous care with which we should guard its purity, and the delight the Blessed Trinity takes therein." The ceremony of consecration lasted five hours, during

all of which Sister Marie-Catherine remained immovable on her knees, neither seeing nor hearing anything that passed around her. It often happened that she was supernaturally instructed in the religious practices ordained by the Rule, or consecrated by long custom. The "Canonical Visit" was for her a renewal of grace. One day, during the Mass of our worthy Bishop, she saw the Saviour, a vial in His hand, anointing each of the religious, by which anointing they received a notable increase of grace. One was so inundated that Sister Marie-Catherine was filled with admiration. On the feast of the Presentation, during the renewal of Vows, Our Lord showed her the names of the Community written in the Book of Life, although, as she said, some would have to satisfy His justice by a severe purgatory.

Notwithstanding her remarkable gift of contemplation, the Divine Master required of her the tribute of vocal prayer. He was pleased to reveal to her those most acceptable to Him, and she experienced their power over the Sacred Heart.

Besides her Rosary, which she never omitted, she daily recited an Act of Reparation and the Litany of the Sacred Heart. She was fond of reading the *Année Sainte* ¹ during the latter years of her life, also portions of the New Testament, and the writings of her holy Founders; but for other books she had no attraction. Where could she find more suitable nourishment for her soul than in the blessed Rules practised in a heroic degree by our first Mothers and Sisters? She was in perfect accord with the

¹ A collection of the Lives of the Religious of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary, for all the months of the year, by the Sisters of the First Monastery of the Visitation, Annecy. In twelve volumes, published at Annecy, 1867-1871.

sentiments of Bishop du Pont des Loges regarding this precious doctrine. He remarked to Mother M. N—, when presenting his congratulations to the Community at the close of the war: “During the troublous times through which we have just passed, times so sad, so disastrous, I sought some rest for my soul by turning my thoughts into other channels. I read the *Année Sainte*. O how I love that work! How happily has its conception been carried out! Your Order is now in possession of so vast a mine of spiritual riches that only one thing remains to be desired, and that is, to draw the nourishment of life from your own writings. The unity of your spirit has always impressed me. It harmoniously blends the beautiful characteristics of St. Francis and St. Chantal.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

Sister Marie-Catherine's Most Conspicuous Virtues, Mortification, Humility, and Abandonment to the Divine Good Pleasure.

“*We must not amuse ourselves with sensible tastes and feelings?*” says St. Jane de Chantal. “*If the soul that receives them does not draw from them these three fruits, mortification, abandonment of self into the hands of God, profound humility and obedience, they are of no account. But possessing the virtues just named, my dear Daughters, you will not long remain in this first degree of sensible sweetness. The Spouse will make you ascend to the highest degree of divine union, provided you are faithful to grace.*” These words throw light on the life of Sister

Marie-Catherine. In it were clearly manifested the signs indicated by St. de Chantal as authentic of divine favors. The slight sketch that we shall give of Sister Marie-Catherine's mortifications, will find its completion in the chapter on her sufferings emanating from supernatural causes. We shall pass rapidly over her remission of self into the hands of God, and her humility. As to the virtues attached to the holy vows, and which certainly held the first rank in her discharge of duty, if we do not fully develop them, it is because each event of her life will portray to what a degree she practised poverty despoiled of all things, angelic purity, and simple obedience. Love of God cannot reign supreme in a soul until it crushes its capital enemy, *self*. Sister Marie-Catherine had undertaken to pursue it in its two most common manifestations, independence of spirit and egotism. How much such a triumph costs! St. de Chantal has revealed it to us in her own energetic language: "*I had a light after Holy Communion, which taught me that the life of the true daughters of the Institute should be a daily death, a living in this world according to the Gospel. Their office is, to abyss themselves in God, losing in that Ocean of goodness all that is proper to them, in order to do and to suffer whatever shall be pleasing to His love.*" But if these words are applicable to a soul resolved not to bargain with love, what must have been the immolation claimed by Our Lord of a spouse prevented, as was Sister Marie-Catherine, with so great an outpouring of the divine tenderness! The empire exercised over her by the interior voice, a kind of divine motor, of which we have so frequently spoken, would have been tyrannical, if we may use her own expression, had it not been sweetened by love. Scarcely an instant passed that this voice did not

require of her the sacrifice of some natural satisfaction, however small, thus bringing under the action of holy love everything connected with her existence. The sovereign law of that love was, "No pleasure save the good pleasure of Almighty God."

How much might be said of the mortification of her senses which, from early years, had been so well ruled and brought under submission to that same force! It gave birth in her to those holy habits which, in the course of time, became to her as a second nature. Her frugality for years would have done credit to an anchorite of the most austere caste. She ate no meat, she drank no wine, vegetables and fruit constituting her only nourishment. When for the sake of community life, as well as to test the spirit that led her, Superiors required a departure from her ordinary way of living, she acquiesced without a word. But hemorrhages followed so quickly one upon another, that liberty on those points was soon restored to her. When extraordinary graces no longer formed her ordinary state, and her life resumed the regular course of community routine, she insensibly and without effort adapted herself to the common life, though retaining something of her past attraction for austerity.

In a similar manner, grace governed all her senses, especially that of sight. It seemed as if it could bear to her soul no image save that of her Saviour or something having relation to Him. At recreation, she looked neither to the right nor to the left, she saw not the Sister on either side of her only so far as the duty of the moment exacted of her. She was never surprised with her eye directed to a new-comer, nor did the various little incidents that provoke hilarity in a community seem to attract her attention. Toward the close of her life, some

one referred to a person with whom she had often conversed. The Sister remarked, "I knew her by her voice, but not by sight."—If she entered the assembly room during recreation, instead of maintaining silence, and thereby obliging the Sisters to make known the subject of their conversation, she was careful to introduce herself by a few monosyllables, which permitted her to remain in ignorance of what was going on before her arrival. No spirit of inquisitiveness diverted her from this way of absolute retrenchment of human gratification. Love lent her wings in her daily flight toward perfection. On one occasion, however, her curiosity was a little excited. She was endowed with a certain natural eloquence. To express the various sentiments of her soul, she would frequently draw from nature comparisons as simple as appropriate. Conversing one day with the mother of one of our scholars, who was making a retreat in the convent, the latter addressed her in a tone of surprise: "Sister Marie-Catherine, do you know that you are very poetical?"—"Poetical!" she repeated to herself after taking leave of the lady, "What is that? What can it be? Is it good or bad?"—and wishing to get some light on the unknown word, she started off to ask some one its meaning. But grace quickly arose above nature. She stopped short. Was it not an opportunity to make a little sacrifice? Ought she to neglect it? It was not till years after, when she had reached the advanced age of eighty-two, that she learned, though accidentally, the meaning of the mysterious word.

There was another species of mortification that she practised almost involuntarily, and that regarded her personal bearing. She never leaned against a seat for support. In her old age, though for many years attacked by paralysis of the spinal cord she never departed from

this practice. Its very continuance rendered it an austerity. Nor was she ever surprised into an eager or useless movement. Could the utmost vigilance have led to such restraint of the senses, if she had not had immediate guidance from On High? Add to this, almost constant insomnia, and we shall have, so to say, only the outer shell of other retrenchments and mortifications that came directly from the hand of God. Providence was liberal with her in this respect, for such occasions were constantly presented to her under varied forms. The physical were not the most painful; those that affected her soul were by far the most crucifying. But of whatever nature they might be, Sister Marie-Catherine was always attentive to accept them whenever and wherever they presented themselves. If it is true that little remains to be done to finish the work of sanctification when the will is conformable to the will of God, we may judge to what a degree she had arrived when we say that one of the most striking features of her sanctity was total abandonment of self to the good pleasure of God.

Abandonment was the practical consequence of her pure love and, as it were, the supreme act of her life. St. Francis de Sales exactly describes its habitual state when he says: "*The indifferent (or abandoned) heart is like unto a ball of wax in the hands of God, to receive alike all the impressions of His eternal good pleasure. It is a heart without choice, equally disposed to all things, without other will save that of her God. She loves only the things that He wishes, and in the will of Him who wishes them. In one word, the will of God being the sovereign object of the indifferent soul, wherever she sees it, she runs after the odor of its perfume.*" This virtue

had a special charm for Sister Marie-Catherine. While endeavoring to perfect herself in it, we might think that she was, in some manner, yielding to natural inclination. She had nevertheless, learned from experience that cost her dear, from experience that entailed labor and struggle, that to abandon one's self is, to put self entirely aside, in order to deliver one's self to God without measure and without reserve. The speedy transformation wrought in her soul by this practice was truly wonderful. She was prepared for it by the sight of the ineffable beauty of Jesus, whose glance followed her everywhere, even through the simplest details of daily life, to strengthen her in every contradiction, and to enlighten her upon the imperfections inseparable from poor human nature. It was the childlike familiarity with Our Lord, those thousand heavenly joys, that detached her heart from everything here below, and created in her soul an unusual capacity for the reception of divine love. Almighty God had no need of words to communicate to her His orders; she turned her eyes toward Him, and she was enlightened upon the least particulars of all her undertakings.

But as self-will cannot wholly die while we live in this life of trial and temptation, Sister Marie-Catherine still retained some little share of imperfect feelings, which became for her, however, subject-matter for new sacrifice. One day, the Superioress found her more than usually joyous. She inquired the cause. Sister Marie-Catherine answered: "Dear Mother, Our Lord has today had His way in a certain thing in which I was inclined to have my own. Is not such action on His part a proof that He knows that He can count upon me?"—To the eyes of her faith, what He willed was good simply because He willed it. It was not merely to the things willed by God that she aban-

doned herself, but it was in God alone that she felt the need of losing herself, of abyssing herself. What He permitted, what He desired, what He preferred, instantly became the object of her preference, sweet or bitter though it might be. Life with its vicissitudes, its accidents, its sacrifices, is but a varied form of the Divine Will. The instant in which Sister Marie-Catherine's lower nature was most hurt, was almost always the moment in which she received a notable increase of holy joy, which manifested itself on her exterior. Sometimes a word of surprise would escape her companions, such as, "What a beaming countenance!" and she would reply, "I want to show God that my heart is ready, in order that He may not feel constrained with me, but may freely do with me, whatever He wills." It was with the same equality of soul that she offered herself to Him to labor or to suffer, to languish in sickness or to rejoice in health. She accepted all in the good pleasure of God, but all in the superior part of her soul. She suffered like others in the inferior part, which betrayed its sensitiveness, struggled against contradictions from creatures, and resented trifling acts of injustice. But her imperfections disturbed neither her peace nor her serenity, for she knew how to cast herself into the arms of God for help and redress.

The act of abandonment that cost her most was that of indifference to the moment of her death. To break the chains that bound her to earth, to see God face to face, was for many years a desire so vehement, that she seemed almost powerless to resign herself to the will of God in that regard. "It gained the ascendancy in spite of myself," she said, "and it is so strong that I cannot resist it. Toward the decline of her life, however, she used to say: "For some time past, I have not experienc-

ed the ardors that hitherto consumed me, and I prefer this state, which enables me to await in peace the hour of my death."

It was through the movement of the Holy Spirit that she surrendered herself to God, offering herself as a victim, and almost invariably receiving light upon what labors and sacrifices would result from her offering. Consent once given, naught remained but to await the action of God. Entering, then, into the spirit of Jesus Christ and uniting herself to Him, she abandoned herself to all the designs of His love. The dolorous phases through which she passed, are the secret of God. We can give but a feeble sketch of the reality. It mattered not to what extremity the love of God reduced her. "*Yes, my God!*" was ever on her lips, *yes*, without restriction either as to the kind or the degree of expiation demanded of her.

When the soul reaches the state in which self-will offers no opposition to the will of God, there is peace. This peace St. Augustine calls "*The tranquillity of order.*" It unites us with God, our neighbor, and ourselves. It is the sweet fruit of abandonment. Sister Marie-Catherine possessed it so fully that the mutability of human affairs never disturbed it. Despite the number and greatness of the sacrifices demanded of her, despite the supernatural suffering through which it pleased Our Lord to unite her to His own, *a wave of peace* constantly swept her soul. The disinterested character of her love forbade her casting a look on self. She kept her eyes fixed on her Lord and Master, whose good pleasure formed the object of all her aspirations. St. Francis de Sales depicts in his Conferences this happy disposition. He says: "*Whoever is very attentive amorously to please the Heavenly Lover, has neither heart nor leisure to return to self, her mind*

continually tending to the side to which love carries it."

Did not Sister Marie-Catherine possess in an equal degree that divine joy which the Holy Spirit engenders in a soul perfectly abandoned to Him? Were not all her desires perfectly accomplished? Was there anything more for her to attain excepting the possession of the God of goodness, her only Love? What feelings of gratitude overflowed her inmost soul! It was an overflowing that she declared herself powerless to resist; so, with the Spouse in the Canticles, she could only repeat: "*My Beloved is all to me, and I am all to Him.*" No afflictions, no trials had power to lessen her holy joy; on the contrary, they seemed to increase it, because supported by humility and meekness of heart. They were a marvellous incentive to die to self, and to cling ever more closely to her God.

Sister Marie-Catherine, become all charity by a real participation in the charity of God in union with the Spirit of Love, advanced rapidly in the path of love and joy. Kindness shone in her whole exterior! And kindness is one of the most beautiful reflections of the Divinity in the heart of man. Sister Marie-Catherine was kind with radiant kindness, which rises superior to every personal interest; a kindness ever ready to oblige, no matter what was the service asked for soul or for body. No expression of countenance ever betrayed any repugnance on her part, or any contrary desire, when a neighbor claimed her help or attention. Her delight was to share with her Sisters the pure joy that inundated her own soul, and trace out for them the way of peace. A holy priest expressed in the following lines his appreciation of this salient point in her virtue. "When we enter into communion with a person of reputed sanctity, we form,

perhaps, an ideal too elevated ever be to realized. But in Sister Marie-Catherine there was nothing deceptive. The first thing in her that made an impression on the observer was her spirit of kindness, her expansive kindness. Now, by this spirit of kindness, I do not mean that which is too worldly, too politic, to be sincere, and which is sometimes termed amiability; still less do I refer to that affected manner of some indiscreet persons in their religious devotions. No, kindness in Sister Marie-Catherine was revealed to me in her words, in her bearing, in her whole person, as an echo, a prolonging of the love of the Heart of Jesus, and of His words when He said: 'Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.' Sister Marie-Catherine at once commanded confidence."

The hidden life, which is the most favorable atmosphere for the growth of Christian humility, was chosen by God for Sister Marie-Catherine as a shelter for the intimate communications that He destined for her. Received for the rank of lay-sister and employed at the boarding-school, whither her admirable qualities seemed to call her, she found there only occasions for self-sacrifice. Her position was a difficult one; for while clothed with the insignia of her humble rank, she should, to preserve dependence and maintain discipline, possess a certain degree of authority in the exercise of her duties. Nothing but her extraordinary tact enabled her to fulfil both rôles as she did, and practise under trying circumstances humility of position, if we may be allowed the expression. She succeeded and, perhaps, without even an effort on her part, so true is it that there is no wisdom comparable to the simplicity of a soul that leans only on God. Humility of heart marked her whole conduct with

a supernatural character, silent reserve, and recollected dignity.

She was meek and humble in the face of blame, of unkind interpretation of her words or intentions. Was not her Divine Master silent under similar circumstances? During the contemplation of His Passion, the Saviour often placed before her eyes the dolorous scenes of the false accusations made against Him before the judges. His unparalleled humility in the midst of such pride and brutality touched her inmost heart. The silent Jesus whom they trampled under foot as a worm of the earth, was her God! The more she is laden with marks of His love, the more she felt increase in her heart the desire to reproduce His divine example by entire conformity of life. A certain Sister, confiding to her some sufferings that sensibly wounded her, received this reply: "Sister, you must be silent, and leave all to our good Saviour. He permits me no reflection upon contradictions, and yet how many He daily sends me!"

Elevated to a high degree of prayer, living in the habitual exercise of holy love, Sister Marie-Catherine esteemed herself happy to lose herself in the practices of the common life, never even rectifying the errors of those that attributed to human causes the effects of a superior order. She left them to their own way of thinking, happy to be shielded against vain honor, which attaches itself to extraordinary things. She frequently begged Our Lord to grant her the same degree of love in the common and hidden life.

Only on rare occasions did she resort to the use of humble words. They then escaped her involuntarily with such an accent of deep conviction that no one could doubt their source. In vain, would we seek in her in-

genuous nature the slightest shade of affectation ; nothing was farther removed from her. Did she for a moment throw off the reserve imposed upon self, one could easily see that it was by the power of the Spirit of which we have spoken, which forced her to plunge herself, as it were, into the waters of humiliation. Had she any communication with one of the pupils, she would recall as circumstances permitted, some episode of her life, long lost sight of, and relate it with details capable of lowering her in the esteem of the young girls imbued with worldly prejudices. “What good is there in returning to the past?” asked one of the Sisters with whom she was employed. “Do you not know that one of the best practices of humility consists in saying neither good nor evil of one’s self.”—“Yes, Sister,” answered Sister Marie-Catherine, “I know that. But the reason that I revert to the past is, because I am unable to resist the Spirit that impels me.” She acknowledged to her Superioress the little weaknesses inherent to human nature. Such acknowledgments furnished the latter with occasions to put to her questions like the following : “Such weaknesses are of the natural order. But in the spiritual order, Sister, have you not to reproach yourself with some little self-esteem?”—“O no, Mother, at least, not to my knowledge. Such a temptation never enters my thoughts. How could it? Am I not a poor creature that receives all from the liberality of her God? Mother, I cannot understand how anyone can take vain-glory from the gifts of God. If they truly come from Him, their first effect is to annihilate the soul that receives them. In beholding the greatness, the beauty, the power, the omniscience of God, we comprehend the nothingness of self, and to fly

such a sight, one would wish to bury herself in the earth. We have no need to seek humility. It comes to us with crushing force. Ah, poor nothing! poor nothing! What are you in the light of God?"—"I questioned Sister Marie-Catherine one day upon her prayers," said one of our Sisters. 'O', she answered, 'if you knew the effect produced on me when Our Lord presents Himself to me as God! What grandeur! What majesty! And I myself so little? How I abase and annihilate myself!'—While saying this, her face was all inflamed. Suddenly she recollected herself, and I heard no more."

She could not deny the graces of which she was the object; but when allusion was made to them, she would say with deep humility: "O what an account to render, having received so much, and given so little! What soul on earth has been so favored as I, and yet has so badly profited by such gifts?"—Far from divulging the secrets of the King to pious souls, she was careful to hide them. Apart from these circumstances, in which the spiritual action was unexpected, and she was, consequently, betrayed into expressing herself, she endeavored to ignore everything that could attract the attention or awaken the admiration of others. Unless questioned, she never spoke of God, and then her favorite subjects were love and confidence. Whatever turn the conversation might have taken, it invariably returned to those points. She would have wished to enlarge all hearts for her good Master, and to convince them that divine charity rules over our misery, and indeed, that it is our very misery that draws upon us the richest effusions of mercy. The words of Jesus Christ upon which she founded her remarks, the thoughts of faith that sprang from them, gave

to her words such vigor and light that they banished all narrowness and pusillanimity from the soul and at once subjected it to her way of thinking.

“The private interviews which I had with Sister Marie-Catherine,” said a priest who greatly esteemed her, “were all of Our Lord Crucified, Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, and Our Lord in the priesthood.

“She always spoke with great simplicity of manner and expression; but O to what elevated, to what sublime ideas she sometimes gave utterance! And it was all so natural, no enthusiasm, and not even the shadow of doubt!

“When she spoke of the most profound mysteries of our holy religion and of the spiritual life, though she had made no special study of them, she expressed her thoughts with ease, always using the proper word, clear and precise, in a way to satisfy the most severe critic of theological distinctions and idioms. And yet, her language had nothing in it that savored of the aphorisms or discussions of a learned doctor. It was characterized only by the sweet and simple charm of a good and holy conversation on Our Lord and in His divine companionship.

“Her knowledge of Our Lord, her facility of speaking of Him so well, was in Sister Marie-Catherine the development of the gift of knowledge that sprang from her faith. The Angelic Doctor teaches that this gift is a reflection of sanctifying grace in the soul. It is in one sense the realization of these words of St. John (I. John II. 27.) *Et vos unctionem quam accepistis ab Eo, maneat in vobis. Et non necesse habetis ut aliquis doceat vos; sed sicut unctio Ejus docet vos de omnibus, et verum est et non est mendacium.* . . . And the unction, which you have received from Him, let it abide in you. And you have no need that any one should teach you; but as His unc-

tion teacheth you concerning all things, and it is truth, and is not a lie.”

CHAPTER XIX.

Sister Marie-Catherine is Tried by Creatures.

Abandonment to the action of love that never veils itself under a cloud, is not the condition of our exile. Sanctity here below being nothing more than Christain heroism, must like it measure its strength against powerful enemies. It must confront perils, encounter difficulties, and endure the privations inseparable from a life of warfare. If such is the law of all holiness, even of that elaborated in secret and under the eye of God alone, how could she who was to reflect the splendors of Thabor escape it? Ordinarily, God makes use of various instruments for this work so much the better adapted to it as His designs over it are higher, His intentions more loving. Sister Marie-Catherine was to embrace the whole world in the ardor of her zeal and the tenderness of her charity. To this she was called by her sublime vocation. Hers was to be the refinement of love, which gives birth only to great suffering. The hour for contradictions was about to strike. It was to be a fruitful hour, which was to usher in for her a series of crucifying trials, from which her virtue was to come forth purer and stronger than ever. The good Master deigned to prepare it Himself. She tells us. “Our Lord one day showed me a heavy cross, pressed me to accept it for His love, and He Himself placed it on my shoulders. It was so long and heavy that I could scarcely

bear its weight. My Divine Saviour gave me to understand that this was the cross of contradictions which He had resolved not to spare me, though He would always be the support of my weakness."

The dear Sister first met this cross in the conflicting judgments passed upon her conduct, judgments which seemed to be authorized by the exceptional and very delicate position that she held in the convent. Even the Superioress' confidence in her aggravated that position and pierced her filial heart, which lived but to devote itself. Her most ordinary remarks were met, at times, with an ironical smile, and such words as these: "When one knows so well how to speak," . . . "We are always in the right!" . . . Unable, on account of her health, to support the labors of her rank, she appeared in the eyes of the lay-sisters, to be seeking alleviations in holy religion, and exemptions from all charges. To this cross was added a state of infirmity, which betrayed itself by no external sign. None but those that lived in close communication with her everyday life could form a just conception of her sufferings, or feel compassion for her. For some of the Sisters, who saw her only from afar, her alternations of total weakness and energetic activity offered a problem which they vainly attempted to solve. Nothing in her exterior called for pity. Her countenance was radiant with youth and freshness, her expression beaming with joy, so that it not unfrequently happened that, when scarcely able to drag herself along, she would hear the exclamation: "What splendid health!" . . . "O how sweet it is to be holy!" . . . For her everything was turned into bitterness. Contradictions surrounded her, followed her. They attacked her on her most sensitive points. She was endowed with extraordinary delicacy of feeling, conse-

quently, she humbled herself as if for some failing in virtue whenever she slightly resented these attacks. A want of attention, an unkind allusion, an encounter a little rude were to her real sufferings. This human side, which she deplored, gave her salutary experience of her own weakness. She bore it calmly, and thus the humiliation dug in her soul the deep bed into which the waters of grace were to flow. "They who fear to discover faults in holy persons," says Bossuet, "know not the power of God's arm in making use of such faults not only for His own glory, but still more for the perfection of His elect." Sister Marie-Catherine little dreamed of the influence of her exquisite sensitiveness upon her soul. She saw only its defective side, little imagining its concurrence with grace in preparing her heart for every sacrifice, for every act of heroic devotedness.

With a nature, fashioned by suffering, joined to a marvellous instinct for supernatural things, Sister Marie-Catherine soon understood that this privileged part was to be hers. She accepted the chalice in the strength supplied her by her Divine Master, resolved to drain it to the very dregs. She was almost always informed beforehand of God's crucifying designs in her regard. He revealed to her in vision that she must be ready to be despoiled of esteem of creatures. He told her that the time was drawing near when all things would turn to her disadvantage, even her virtues, the imperfect side of which alone would appear. Her daily Communion contributed to make the judgment passed upon her all the more rigorous, and in many an encounter she was given to feel it. If it happened that her actions betrayed some human weakness, she would be met with the remark: "And yet, our Sister communicates every day!" . . . as if

the privilege of impeccability were attached to this favor. The trial of doubt and incredulity respecting whatever went beyond the ordinary course of divine grace, a trial to which it pleases God to submit most souls favored with the gifts of His love, was to fall to her, also. The severity of the judgment which could tolerate in her not the least imperfection, without immediately raising a doubt as to the reality of the divine favors of which she was the object, does not appear strange when we remember that she herself often by word or act furnished the weapons aimed against her. At another time, she would herself have been the first to censure those very words and acts. "Why, then," asked a charitable witness, "did you express such a sentiment when you knew that you would not be approved?"—"I could not help it," she answered, "although I knew that I should be accountable for the impression it would make. The Spirit that impels me, wishes for me contempt and abjection. In vain, would I try to avoid it. I cannot say how much my whole soul recoils from this guidance of annihilation!"—If her fine and delicate feelings made her keenly alive to the least doubt cast upon her state; if a remnant of self-love joined to her natural sensibility, was still mingled with her suffering, it proceeded in a great measure from the fear of scandalizing her Sisters, whom she tenderly loved. Toward the close of her life, God freed her entirely from that fear. Speaking confidentially, in 1875, she said: "For two years, Our Lord has bestowed upon me a great grace, that of perfect indifference to the judgments of creatures. Before every action, I turn toward Him, to seek the light of His will. Having received it, I go straight on with no other desire than that of pleasing the only Object of my love. Let creatures say and think

what they please. O how far are they from my heart!”

But a new kind of trial was yet in store for this soul so tested by the jealous God. Her very virtue will draw it upon her, for it was not understood by even the most fervent of her Sisters, even by the most regular, and they taxed her with illusion, with indiscreet piety. Her actions were suspected, and they became the cause of unjust complaints against her. Is not the Rule in its integrity the height of Visitandine perfection? And yet the impulse of the Spirit that conducted her was irresistible. She could neither arrest nor moderate it. She endured from it inexpressible anguish. Often when kneeling at the bedside of a sick child, the force of the divine action would ravish her out of her senses, and the Directress of the school would surprise her in that state. This Sister, a woman of firm faith when there was question of the Gospel, affected incredulity with regard to the graces she witnessed in Sister Marie-Catherine, and openly treated them as dreams and imagination. “If God granted me some extraordinary favor,” she would say to her laughingly, “I should have as much trouble to believe it, and I should judge myself just as I now do you.”

It sometimes happened that, at the first words of the confessor in the confessional, Sister Marie-Catherine was rapt in ecstasy, and she knelt for a longer or a shorter time immovable. After having resorted to all means in his power to recall her from the heights to which she had been borne, he would be obliged to call in the aid of an out-sister, who would give notice of it in the convent. Fancy the humiliation of the poor Sister when returned to herself! To increase her embarrassment. Our Lord permitted that the witnesses on such occasions should be the very Sisters who put no faith in her celestial commun-

ications. Through charity, she feigned unconsciousness of their sentiments toward her, and opposed to to their disapprobation only a greater desire to do them good. Our Lord, it is true, often espoused her cause. His severe countenance testified that the darts directed against her attacked Himself. He avenged even unfavorable thoughts harbored against her. For a whole day, she saw a soul from purgatory following her wherever she went. When in obedience to her Superioress, she asked her reason for so doing, the soul answered: "Up to this time, I have not reaped any benefit from the prayers you said for me, because of the uncharitable judgment that I passed upon your virtue. I had no faith in the high and exceptional graces of which you are the object." Thus did the liberty that this soul had taken to censure what was not conformed to her narrow and personal views, oblige her to so humiliating an acknowledgment. To God alone it belongs to judge the heart. His eye alone can penetrate its inmost recesses, and estimate the purity of intention which gives to our actions their real value. Blind submission to the will of God was, as it were, the main-spring of Sister Marie-Catherine's activity. To be always ready for all things, to throw her whole soul into her obedience, to support that virtue with all her energy, was the highest interest of her life. Divinely enlightened upon the intrinsic worth of religious dependence and obedience, she had recourse to her Superiors for everything. From them she concealed nothing. Her spirit of faith knew no limits, and her soul under their gaze was transparent as water. Whether the Superioress to whom she had recourse supported her direction by age, experience, and supernatural gifts; or whether just entering upon her charge, humble prudence kept her on her guard in re-

spect to so elevated a way as was that of Sister Marie-Catherine, the latter thought not. From the moment that she who governed was the elect of God, and God had promised to be present in her, that sufficed for Sister Marie-Catherine's faith. She went straight on her way even in the presence of doubt and incredulity, sometimes, indeed, feigned. She fulfilled her duty in all simplicity, nor did self-love, after some contradiction under cover of human prudence, have power to restrain her. She never deviated from this line of duty. "*God and my Superioress*," was her watchword. Even in the most trying periods of her religious life, she looked for no help from without. Could God withdraw from her after she had confided herself to Him, had cast herself in so childlike a manner into His arms?

In discovering to her Superioress the favors of which she was the object, whatever her certitude about them, a certitude imprinted in her soul by Our Lord Himself, her words always expressed modesty and self-diffidence. "Mother," she would say, "It seems to me so and so. . . I think that I saw or heard it, but I may be deceived. ." Even when to try her, they feigned incredulity, no trace of secret attachment to her own ideas could be detected. "Our Lord," she used to say. "rebukes me for the least return on self as for an infidelity. This good Saviour wishes to be to me more than all His gifts. I receive them with gratitude, but without any desire to keep them. Ah! let the gifts pass, but let my Jesus stay with me! ". . . How faithful was this disinterested soul to her Jesus! In forgetfulness and obscurity, she sighed after Him alone, annihilating herself in proportion to the gifts that she received. She knew that they were purely gratuitous, and not a recompense of her fidelity. When rendering an

account of her soul to her spiritual guides, she unveiled to them even the involuntary movements of the inferior part, omitting nothing that could bring with it confusion.

Sister Marie-Catherine was occasionally submitted to the examination of some Religious Father of sound doctrine and enlightened piety, her Superioress justly fearing the responsibility of directing one so high in virtue. It was only when assured that she was directed by the Holy Spirit, that they permitted her to follow peacefully her exceptional vocation. They did not do this, however, without securing to her supernatural gifts the cover of obscurity and silence. They watched vigilantly that her heavenly favors should not be known to the rest of the Community. This was an easy matter, since Sister Marie-Catherine's interior attraction led her to make her Superioress alone the depository of the divine secrets.

We shall now say a few words upon the conduct of two Superioresses toward her. They directed her alternately throughout the period of her extraordinary graces. One was Mother Marie-Thérèse Dorr, the other Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan, both of whom, actuated only by the Spirit of God, yet received very different light for her direction in the way of pure love. The former directed her heavenly gifts to the practice of self-abnegation; the latter made them subservient to charity.

Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan, largely endowed with all that could captivate the world, was still more richly gifted in what could charm the eye of God. Noble and generous, she fulfilled the duties of her position with absolute disinterestedness. Her humility equalled her nobility of soul. At the period of which we are now speaking, old age with its infirmities was coming upon her. Obligated by sickness frequently to keep her own room,

she had chosen Sister Marie-Catherine for the secret dispenser of her charity to the poor. Sometimes she directed her to renew in part the wardrobe of some pupil whose family had suffered reverse of fortune ; again she charged her with bonbons for some little orphan who, seeing the maternal heart in the gift, would feel her privation less bitterly. A thousand such projects were executed by the young lay-sister, and they were to her full of sweet consolation. These two souls, whose age, education, and interior way differed so widely, were drawn to each other by the Holy Spirit in a feeling of religious sympathy. Time strengthened the bond, for Sister Marie-Catherine daily became more necessary to the invalid Mother. During the revolutionary crisis of 1848, she was truly her consoling angel. France declared itself a Republic. This fact gave rise to the question : Would the new state of affairs be for the life or the death of religion ? Vague apprehension took possession of all interested as to what would be the fate of the Religious Orders. The most doleful pictures of the future were conjured up by some. One, in particular, trusting only to his own imagination, aroused the fears of Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan. It was the good lay-sister who removed the depressing influence of his words. Her unalterable confidence in God and her assurances of the special protection which He had promised, allayed the good Mother's anxiety. "Mother," Sister Marie-Catherine would say in a tone of deep conviction, "we shall not be obliged to leave our convent. Our Lord laughs at the measures adopted by human prudence. He will take care of us. He wants us to confide in Him."—She used to enter this Mother's presence with a certain joyous consciousness of being perfectly understood and appreciated. Her words were

marked by affectionate freedom and lively wit, which often brought a smile to the lips of the venerated Mother. Her filial communications with the invalid were like the genial rays of the sun, warming and enlivening her life soon to fade in death.

Of quite another stamp was the character of Mother Thérèse Dorr, although she, too, belonged to the race of great souls. At the period of which we write, the experience of mature age manifested itself in her conduct, and especially in her ardent zeal for the glory of God. All her aspirations turned to the perfection of the religious spirit. Heroic abnegation charmed her courageous soul, and loving self-renunciation contained in her eyes the whole code of the spiritual life. With Blessed Margaret Mary, she loved to repeat: "*A life without sacrifice is a life without love.*" The religious Profession had been for her strong soul a true contract, by which Jesus Christ gave Himself and His Cross to her, that she might participate in His sufferings and humiliations. She had responded to the gifts as only saints know how to respond, and that is, by entire self-renunciation. When called to the government of souls, she had adopted as her motto these words of St. Francis de Sales: "*The way of the daughters of the Visitation is their Rules and Constitutions.*" With eyes ever fixed on those blessed Rules, the faithful expression of the will of God, she enforced their practice with all the persevering energy of her own will. As much as she prized the elevated way when God was manifestly the Leader, so much did she dread it for weak and impressionable souls whose imagination is easily excited. As a counterpoise to such souls; she loved to oppose the common life, so safe on account of its multitudinous sub-

jections and annihilations. "An act of faith in Divine Providence and total abandonment to all Its dispositions," she would say, "brings more peace and security to my soul than innumerable extraordinary assurances," to which, let us add, she never wished to resort in the exercise of her office of Superioress. Prayer, the Rule, confidence in Superiors, and humble recourse to their authority, were for her the infallible certitude of God's will. She soon understood the delicate mission that had been confided to her, namely, that of protecting Sister Marie-Catherine's humility against vain-glory, one of the principal snares of the enemy. She abstained, therefore, from distinguishing her by any special marks of esteem or confidence. She listened to the story of her graces without appearing to attach importance to them, always leading her back to the perfection of the Rule in its everyday observance. Far from favoring her supernatural attractions, she courageously contradicted them at all times and in all places, Holy Communion even being no exception. She was too enlightened not to feel confident that this firm direction, far from hindering the operations of God, would only prepare for them a freer action. Nor did she count in vain on the virtue of her humble disciple, whose communications with her were always stamped with her usual childlike confidence and religious respect. An observer would never have suspected the diametrically opposite conduct to which these two Superioresses subjected her. This diversity of direction was, in the designs of God, the means best adapted to manifest her solid virtue, which was true, sincere, and independent of all exterior causes, since abandonment to His will dominated every other cause. In circumstances

hard to poor nature, there was no change in her manner of acting. Her interior was always in accord with her exterior, her actions the perfect expression of her thoughts and sentiments.

CHAPTER XX.

Sister Marie-Catherine Tried by the Evil One.

To the trials arising from the contradiction and incredulity of those around her, was added the unrelenting pursuit of the spirit of darkness. He possessed the power to persecute her from the very beginning of her religious life, but his malicious attacks only exhibited more clearly the solidity of her virtue and, at the same time, exercised her patience. We remember her repugnance for food of whose perfect cleanliness she had the least suspicion, also her resolution to overcome herself generously whenever the occasion offered. This resolution was for the demon the signal for new kinds of persecution. Not a day passed that she did not find hairs, spiders, or worms in her food; but despite her disgust, she came off victorious. Vanquished on one side, the devil appeared on another with that perseverance which characterizes him. There was no kind of awkwardness that he did not try to make her commit. He carried his pranks to such a height that, without the interposition of her good angel, not a vessel in the convent would have remained whole. One day, a Sister saw her carrying a tray of dishes, when suddenly some invisible power pushed her so rudely that she slipped down several stairs.

The expression of her countenance betrayed the author of the malicious deed. Such mishaps were of almost daily occurrence. When her enemy gained nothing from them but an increase of confusion, he assumed divers forms, each more hideous than the last, either to tempt or to intimidate her. She often saw him in broad daylight, and his appearance filled her with horror. In the first years of her religious life, she never dared to communicate her fright at these terrible apparitions. In her simplicity, she thought that she ought to bear them alone and in silence, so greatly did she fear to rob God by seeking support from creatures. This trial was one of the most terrible to which she was subjected, and the one to which she could least accustom herself. Even in the last years of her life, the dread of its recurrence froze her with horror. Later on, when better instructed, and scrupling to conceal anything from her Superioress, she found in obedience a shelter against such snares, as well as profound peace of soul.

One day, while praying before a statue of the Blessed Virgin highly venerated among us, she took no notice of a black cat that was seated on a corner of the step. It then settled itself upon the skirt of her habit. She made a movement to dislodge it, when it suddenly disappeared, and the devil stood before her. Breathless she ran along the corridor in the direction in which she espied a door half-open. On reaching it, she darted into the room, and fell on her knees imploring Our Lady's help. Her prayer was instantly answered. Mary appeared to her as Our Lady of Fourvières, and put the enemy to flight. At another time, she saw in our choir one of those damned spirits covered with scales. Great were her surprise and indignation at his intruding himself into that holy place

The darkness of night brought to her still greater persecution of the same kind. Although to the malignant spirit the soul is a closed book, we dare not deny that he can, thanks to his superior intellect, foresee the designs of God upon His chosen ones, and use his hellish machinations to frustrate them. Sister Marie-Catherine had received from God the office of mediatrix between sinners and His outraged justice. She became on this account a target for the rage of hell. Sometimes whole nights were passed in frightful suggestions on the one side, and outpourings of supreme confidence and self-abandonment on the other, while the most dreadful apparitions paralyzed her with terror. For long hours, to behold one of those wicked spirits at her bedside threatening her, was not the least of her tortures. Sometimes it was not a single one, but a crowd of demons that she had to struggle against at once. Restrained, however, in his diabolical efforts, his attacks being subservient to the designs of Almighty God, Satan could not overstep the bounds imposed upon him. He was never permitted to attack her person, though sometimes he feigned a power that he did not possess. "You are getting along finely," he would say to her. "You belong to me. Nothing will save you from my control over you."—Again, he would address her ironically: "Poor fool! You think you are pleasing your God, but your soul is black in His eyes. You pride yourself on loving Him, and yet what have you done up to this time to show your love?"—Again, he would sneer at her: "All your efforts are thrown away!"—At other times, he would try to drive her to despair: "What recompense can a life like yours merit?"—and he would recount her least imperfections exaggerating them and trying to make her look upon them as real

crimes. "Look at them well," he would say, "and you will see that you are only a hypocrite!" When he found himself conquered by the valiant Sister he resorted to strategem. Frequently detained by her duties at the academy during a great part of the time of prayer, she used to wait in the anti-choir the moment for taking her rank for Holy Communion. The appearance of one of the infirm Sisters, who was returning from the tribune, was always the signal for her to enter the choir. Several times, however, an irresistible impulse urged her to go on ahead of that Sister, when, to her surprise, the latter at once disappeared. The devil, taking advantage of the indisposition which prevented the infirm Sister from rising on that morning, assumed her form in order to deceive Sister Marie-Catherine, and thus keep her late for Holy Communion.

For many years, Almighty God demanded of our dear Sister a sacrifice which often seemed above her strength. She occupied a room near the children's infirmary, but at some distance from any other sleeping apartment. In case of fright, her cries could not be heard, and no one would come to her assistance. A word from her would have been sufficient. Her Superioress would have arranged for a Sister to sleep near her. But Sister Marie-Catherine renounced such support. She put her trust in God, and kept silence. We may add that on many occasions her confidence was put to a severe test, and divine help alone could have sustained her.

Nothing could ever weaken the impression of a horrible vision of hell that she had one night. Years after, she trembled when she recalled it, and exclaimed with an indefinable accent: "Ah, if we did but know what hell is!". . . That place of eternal expiation had been shown

her under the form of an immense inverted cone. Despite its impenetrable darkness, she saw into its very depths, and beheld the frightful confusion there reigning. "Picture to yourself," she said, "a rapid movement that nothing can stop, a kind of whirlpool in which the demons and the damned are huddled together, the former exercising their infernal rage upon the latter. See a fire whose sinister glare no word can describe. Listen to prolonged howlings of rage and despair. At the bottom of the abyss, lies a dragon alternately swallowing and ejecting the wretches condemned to that frightful punishment." . . . Paralyzed with fear, the poor Sister saw four demons approach her bed. Each took a corner of the sheet on which she lay, and held her above the whirlpool as if about to cast her into it. She heard horrible cries of "Let her fall! She belongs to us!" Despair seemed to fill her soul, but in the superior part the light of hope still shone, to support her. In another vision, the devil took her on his shoulders, crossed the convent wall, and carried her to a dense forest, a kind of grotto of hell. There she beheld a crowd of infernal spirits. She asked herself in terror, "Am I going to become their prey? . . . No, no? a feeling of confidence still remained in the bottom of my heart. I invoked the Blessed Virgin, and the horrible vision vanished."

A secret instinct of grace led her to direct her cry of distress to the Immaculate Virgin, to whom belonged the glorious privilege of crushing Satan's head, and whose name alone gives invincible security. In all her struggles against the powers of darkness, it was almost always Mary who delivered her. She generally appeared to her under the form in which she is venerated in some sanctuary dear to the piety of the Faithful, and at her ap-

proach, the enemy took to flight. Vanquished in his efforts to make her despair, the father of lies soon reappeared, and attacked her on the side of humility. Several times he transformed himself into an angel of light, and tried to seduce her by a show of religious veneration for her sanctity. "One day," she told us, "I was making my prayer in the infirmary of the pupils. I was kneeling before a picture of the Sacred Heart, all the powers of my soul absorbed in that dear Object of our love. Suddenly, the demon under the form of our Holy Mother de Chantal stood before me. She had come, she said, to treat with me on the affairs of the Institute, and upon some points in particular highly important for maintaining it in its perfection. The ruse was too absurd ! Our Holy Mother conferring with a poor village-girl without experience or authority !—I humbled myself, and made the sign of the Cross. That forced Satan to beat so hasty a retreat that I could not help laughing at his shame and weakness." In another vision, he showed her her body separated from her soul, and made her assist at her own funeral service. A large number of Bishops surrounded her remains, rendering her the honors due to a saint. "A thought of complacency crossed my mind," she said. "But conceiving horror for it, I armed myself with the sign of the Cross, and sank into the abyss of my own nothingness. The vision at once disappeared."—Sister Marie-Catherine knew by experience that it was only for a time. She kept on the defensive by unswerving fidelity. She knew that, in combats against the powers of darkness, the least actions may insure the victory.

Her faith conquered the evil one. The veil which conceals from us the eternal truths was drawn aside for her.

All things in this world were enlightened for her by the sweet vision of Jesus which, like her own shadow, ever followed her. She had, also, clear light upon the Holy Gospels, which discovered to her their profound sense and their sovereign power over the spirit of lies. Still more invincible than her faith was her love which, by a rapid flight, bore to God her thoughts, desires, and affections, concentrating in Him her whole life. Her incomparable simplicity of soul protected her from the suggestions of Satan. Our eminent prelate, Mgr. du Pont des Loges, attributed to the simplicity of her interior life all the graces with which she was favored.

Nature and grace concurred to form and perfect in her this beautiful virtue. Her uncultured mind was never subjected to those analytical processes which, in our day, torture so many bright intellects, and render them an easy prey to Satan. God alone was reflected in the pure and limpid soul of Sister Marie-Catherine.

CHAPTER XXI.

Sister Marie-Catherine Unites Suffering with Labor.

Physical pain holds but a secondary rank in the soul's initiation into the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ. Logical order demanded, therefore, that it should be the first to exercise its chastening influence on Sister Marie-Catherine's soul. Then came sadness and mental sufferings, resulting from intercourse with creatures, and, above all from the action of the powers of darkness, trials to which virtue of a superior order is often subjected, to effect the perfect

transformation of the creature into Jesus Christ. But the sufferings of Sister Marie-Catherine were very different from ordinary bodily pains. Supernatural in their origin, they were such, also, in their effects, their exterior manifestation not falling under the domain of science. Many physicians testified to this. They frankly acknowledged their ignorance of the facts upon which they were consulted.

It would be impossible to depict the martyrdom to which the courageous Sister was subjected; for to conceive a just idea of it, one must have lived in intimate communication with her. For entire nights, and often during a part of the day, she would lie motionless and lifeless on her bed. A cold sweat covered her face, and her palor seemed to presage immediate death. At times, she was a prey to unknown pains, all the members of her body being dislocated in some incomprehensible way. Ordinarily when in this state, she neither saw nor heard anything passing around her. A few incoherent words sometimes made known the secret of her mysterious sufferings: "*My God, pardon them, for they know not what they do!*"—" *My Father, Thy will, not mine be done!*"—" *My God, mercy! Ah! be appeased! Cast Thy eyes upon Thy Son,*" etc. . . . Nothing could be more extraordinary than her sufferings. They were always in harmony with the feelings that stirred her soul, and they appeared the striking expression of a wound made by the Divine Hand. The intellectual view with which she was favored, the contemplation of her Saviour in the bloody scenes of His Passion, drew her in some way out of herself and into Him by a feeling of immense compassion. She felt the sorrows of the Divine Victim with such intensity that their marks appeared upon her exterior, and

they corresponded to the mysteries upon which Our Lord directed the gaze of her soul. Was she assisting at the heart-rending scene of the scourging, she was penetrated with loving commiseration so great that it seemed as if the barbarous executioners in striking the innocent Victim struck her, also. Then her whole body would suddenly be covered with livid bruises, which proved her real participation in that special martyrdom of Jesus.

What shall we say of her love for Our Lord on the Cross and of its marvellous effects, of which her body bore the glorious imprint? For several years, red and very painful swellings appeared on the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet. Vainly did she try to hide them from the gaze of the pupils. Being obliged to handle objects in their use, and often finding it impossible to grasp them, we may well imagine what a field was thus opened up to their youthful investigation. "I always looked upon our dear infirmarian as a saint," said one of our Sisters who had been a former pupil. "But I was certain of only one of her extraordinary favors, and that was, her stigmata. It was noised throughout the school that she had received that gift, and O what a state of excitement we were in! As in certain other cases of the same kind, I was among the most interested. I can recall her pain and deep confusion during those days, especially once when I asked her to let me look at her hands. Our Directress put an end to the expression of such curiosity, by telling us one day that the first who would speak of the stigmata should be sent home. I received a very strong admonition in private. I can see myself now closing the door saying: 'One thing is certain, and that is, they have not said that she has *not* the stigmata,' and and I always retained my belief in them."—We shall here

add that never in the Community was any allusion made to that favor either directly or indirectly, nor was it ever submitted to human science. We had the testimony of our sight to corroborate the fact, but we never passed judgment upon it. We regarded it in respectful silence.

But what remained hidden from our eyes, was the deep wound in her side, which disappeared without the application of any remedy and as quickly as it had been formed. After her frequent contemplation of the Agony in the Garden, or when she followed the Saviour from the prætorium to Calvary in making the Way of the Cross, blood flowed from her face like an abundant sweat induced by hard labor.

Who can say, who even comprehend, without experiencing it, what the Holy Spirit can operate in a soul perfectly abandoned to His guidance? If He permits in the body sufferings so great as to make it an image of Jesus Christ Crucified, what must be the intensity of that which is suffering in very deed, namely, of that which directly attacks the heart, and there abides? Suddenly, and without the least warning, some dreadful crisis would attack Sister Marie-Catherine, and reduce her almost to the agony of death. We knew at such moments that the arm of God was weighing heavily upon her, and that some sinner was to be snatched from the demon. What could we do for her under such circumstances? Nothing! We merely prohibited entrance to her chamber, and committed her entirely to the care of her Jesus. The crisis over, she would reappear full of spiritual strength, like a soul ready for fresh struggles.

Whether the cause of these sufferings was natural or supernatural, Our Lord seemed unable to resist the humble prayer of His servant when she begged her cure in

the name of holy obedience. One morning, as she was preparing breakfast for the pupils, she upset a vessel of boiling water on her feet. This was the second severe accident that morning. The Superioress finding her stretched on two chairs and suffering greatly from her scalds, could not restrain her tears. Touched by her compassion, Sister Marie-Catherine said to her: "Ah! Mother, do not weep! I shall ask Our Lord to cure me, and He will do so to please you." As the Superioress appeared to attach little importance to her words, she went on in a low tone: "Ah! Our Lord does good to others, Mother, and you know nothing about it."—She was carried to her bed. Two hours later, when the infirmarian came to inspect the extent of the burn, she found it perfectly cured. Not the least trace of it could be discovered.

Though Our Lord often showed her such condescension, yet He rarely allowed her to procure by her own seeking any alleviation in her pains. He would say to her these words: "*And I! Did I permit Myself any relief?*"—If she instinctively followed the natural impulse to procure some relief, a sudden increase of physical pain and a feeling of anxiety would warn her that only by pure suffering could she satisfy the divine good pleasure.

Sometimes, however, Our Lord seemed to relax His rigor, and touchingly to compassionate His suffering victim. Then He inspired her to turn to Him with some prayer which was always heard. On one occasion, our dear Sister had been in such a state as to prevent her eating or sleeping. A fearful thunder-storm arose. "My God," she exclaimed in her simplicity, "please to let Thy thunder go further away!"—O divine condescension!

All became calm, and only the last distant rumblings could be heard. Next day, she said: "O how good Our Lord is! Those touching little attentions of His love go more directly to my heart than even real miracles."

At one time she suffered greatly from her eyes, though they still remained bright and clear as ever. She knew very well that science could not help her, and so she had a sudden inspiration. She went to an oratory of the Blessed Virgin, and offered to her good Mother her failing sight, begging her to preserve it, if such were the will of God. The favor was granted. Afterward, when paralysis had deprived her of the use of her limbs, she was urged to make use of the same means of restoration. "No," she replied, "I cannot. God does not inspire me to do so."

It was always a subject of wonder to us how she could undertake so many exterior occupations with so many interior sufferings, so many extraordinary communications with God, and yet veil all under the semblance of the common life. She herself revealed the secret. "Life would be insupportable to me," she said, "if all my words, my steps, and actions were not purely and really directed toward love, and were not to love the only thing in my power." And again: "I would not know how to comprehend love, without the absolute seeking of the will of God."—"The will of God is His good pleasure in everything, even in the most insignificant details of life." For her there was no difference in these two ways of expressing her love: To suffer in God's holy will, or to act according to the movement of His Spirit.

Sister Marie-Catherine excelled in the faithful employment of time. Every action was performed at the

right time and in the right place. She was, indeed, aided in this by her remarkably well-balanced mind, but grace could lawfully lay claim to a large share of the merit. She never made choice of her work, but left herself at the disposition of obedience. After the example of her Divine Master, she did all things well, and she was always to be found at the post of duty. Oftentimes the multiplicity of the charges committed to her care was calculated to ruffle the peace of even the most imperturbable. Three or four of the Sisters, associated with her in some duty, would come at the same moment to consult her about the work, or to lay before her their difficulties. With a serene countenance, she would say a sweet word, and thus remain mistress of the situation. When silence was at length restored, she would say with a smile: "O my God, how good difficulties and contradictions must be, since Thou art so generous with them in my favor!" When some unforeseen duties called for greater exertion, it seemed as if she were suddenly endowed with the gift of agility gaily and lightly to discharge them. It made one think of the agility of the glorified. Then we caught such exclamations as these: "Thou wilt be satisfied, my Jesus? This will give Thee pleasure?—Ah, well! Yes!" . .

She loved to repeat: "When I think that a single useless thought takes the place of an act of love, or deprives sinners of some grace, or the souls in purgatory of some help, I cannot forgive myself."

To absolute retreat, Sister Marie Catherine preferred the regular daily routine, in which contemplation and action are so well blended as to permit her to consume herself in love and prayer. "The time of my retreats," she used to say, "has never been one of great sensible fervor

for me. In them I am generally called upon to expiate. Spiritual joy is given me at those times only in small measure and at rare moments."

CHAPTER XXII.

Sister Marie-Catherine Shares in the Sufferings of Our Lord.

For a long time, union with Jesus in suffering appeared to Sister Marie-Catherine as the highest degree of charity. To suffer for Him and for the neighbor, was her heart's most earnest desire. Her eyes constantly on the Divine Model, she drew from the contemplation of His sufferings the strength necessary to correspond perfectly with His crucifying designs upon her. "I would not know how to live without sufferings," she would sometimes exclaim. "If I ceased to suffer for one moment, I should complain to God of His having abandoned me." Our Lord seemed to take pleasure in testing her sincerity. He sometimes aroused her during the night with the words: "*Could you not watch one hour with Me!*"—and placing before her eyes some one of the sorrowful scenes of His Passion, excite her most tender compassion by the words: "*Behold, My daughter, the state to which sinners have reduced Me!*" Every sin had in Our Lord a corresponding expiation, which roused in her a mortal hatred of evil. Sometimes, it was necessary for Jesus only to show Himself in such a state, for her to understand what His love required of hers. Now it was Jesus laden with sorrow, presenting to her His winding-sheet,

and begging her to restore His disfigured image in the souls of sinners. Then she would offer herself to Divine Justice to merit for them that grace. Again, it was Jesus expressing Himself in language that roused her thirst for reparation. At another time, It was Jesus presenting Himself before her crowned with thorns, suffering cruelly from His wounds, and thus addressing her: "*I want to draw out these thorns.*" Full of compassion, the dear Sister would set about helping Him, when she would hear from His divine lips: "*You cannot do it with your hands.*" She understood the lesson, and prepared for union in suffering greater and more intense.

Her longing to suffer with Our Lord increased notably on the occasion of a certain favor then bestowed on her. The following is her own account of it: "I was awakened one night by the well-known voice of Our Lord. He stood before me in the lamentable condition to which the cruelty of the Jews had reduced Him during the hours that He passed in prison. His countenance was expressive of ineffable sorrow, and He heaved heavy sighs. His hands were contracted by excessive pain, and in the words of the Prophet, He writhed like a worm.—'*Behold,*' He said to me, *to what a state sinners have reduced Me!*"—So deeply was that sight imprinted on my soul that time will never efface it. I felt that the sweet Saviour should not suffer alone, far from the sight of those for whom He so generously devoted Himself to the justice of His Father. I offered to console Him myself by the extreme compassion that the sight inspired me." Immolation and sacrifice formed the incessant and noble satisfaction exacted of her by holy love.

On a certain Holy Thursday, when she was praying in the tribune, Jesus unfolded before her His whole Passion,

from His agony in the garden to His death on the Cross. During this sorrowful contemplation, which lasted several hours, a copious sweat of blood trickled down her face. Those moving scenes were so impressed upon her soul that, had she the power, she could have painted them in their minutest details. This vision gave her a clear understanding of the heinousness of sin, and the power of every faithful soul to labor efficaciously for the conversion of sinners, by fervent prayer and secret sacrifice. The following was another vouchsafed her, and left in writing by herself: "On Good Friday, I spent three hours near Jesus in the Garden of Olives. My heart was filled with sorrow at the sight of the abundant flow of blood from His Sacred Body. For nearly two hours I could neither think nor speak. In silence I contemplated His excessive love for man. The Divine Saviour said to me: '*Many deceive themselves in thinking it sufficient to look upon My goodness, and to shed some tears over My sufferings. True love desires to share them with Me. It accepts all pains, humiliations, and ignominies, unites them to those that I have endured, and offers them to the Eternal Father.*'"

More intense and more prolonged sufferings were generally the harbingers of calamitous events, or the expiation of great crimes. At such times, she told her Superioress of events that were about to take place. She witnessed the criminal act not only in itself, but she saw, also, those circumstances that increased its enormity in the sight of God. She penetrated into the councils of the wicked, heard their malicious plots, followed their infernal intrigues, discovered their malicious snares to beguile weak souls, who allow themselves to be allured by ascination or ignorance; in a word, besides the ex-

terior act, she saw the corruption of heart which urged on the sinner. Such knowledge tortured her pure and loving soul, as numerous facts go to show. We shall record two. The night before the murder of Mgr. Sibour, Archbishop of Paris, was to her a period of anguish. Next morning, she gave a detailed account of the crime at the very moment that it took place. The newspapers of the following day corroborated her statement. At the precise moment of the attempt to assassinate Napoleon III., she described as an eye-witness the secret machinations of the conspirators, who were being urged on by the spirit of darkness. She designated the several streets and their subterranean outlets with as much precision, as if she were standing on the spot. These thrilling pictures of sin were shown her in order to rouse her to expiatory satisfaction. Like a pure victim, she gave herself up to Our Lord, conjuring Him to suspend the effects of His justice, or let them fall on her alone. Whole hours were spent sometimes in humble supplication on her part, and persevering refusal on that of Our Lord. But overcome, at last, by her entreaties, Almighty God would consent to let His anger fall upon her. After bearing the rigor of His wrath for a time longer or shorter, she was again restored to the blessed action of love, and received in recompense for her voluntary immolation consolations that no language can express. Her courage was reanimated under the divine lights and assurances accompanying them, her capacity for suffering enlarged while she awaited the signal for a new, and often a more sorrowful, station on Calvary.

The cholera was raging in many localities, and especially at Éply, the place of Sister Marie-Catherine's birth. It there proved so fatal that it seemed as if Divine

Justice had marked it out for special expiation. The religious in charge of the victims went, in the name of her relatives and friends, to Sister Marie-Catherine to beg the help of her prayers. They related to her the heart-rending scenes attendant on the pestilence, and above all, the pitiable condition of the numerous orphans, poor and homeless. Their sad story ended with these words: "Remember you did not become a religious for yourself alone, but to pray for all mankind." What was Sister Marie-Catherine's emotion on hearing these words! They were precisely the same that had been addressed to her by a voice from Heaven when leaving her native city to enter religion. Time had not weakened their impression, and we shall see how it pleased Our Lord to repeat them. Scarcely had they struck her ear for the second time, when, under the secret impulse of the Holy Spirit, she offered herself to God with her whole heart, to be despoiled of all the spiritual delights that generally inundated her soul, and to bear, if so it pleased Him, the abandonment of His Justice. Her heroic prayer was heard in part, and the mortality ceased. Sister Marie-Catherine's favors now became more interior, and she could more easily hide them from the eyes of others. Her ecstasies and raptures continued the same, though of a more painful character, and less frequently manifested outwardly.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Sister Marie-Catherine's Mission of Universal Prayer.

The highest honor to which God can raise a soul, is to render her capable of receiving intimate communications from His Divine Majesty. But how painful, how fruitful in crosses of all kinds, are such vocations, we do not generally know. The reason is simple. The nearer a soul approaches God, unites herself with Him, identifies herself with Him, the more she loves Jesus Christ, the more perfectly she imbibes His spirit, and the more, also, does she participate in His Divine action on the world and on the Church in particular. To her, above all, may be applied this word: "*Thou art another Jesus Christ,*" which means that all the actions of that soul should bear the seal of Christ immolated for us. St. Catherine of Sienna understood this when she exclaimed: "*Unworthy though I am, I burn to give my life, my blood, the marrow of my bones for Holy Church.*" After the example of this great saint, Sister Marie-Catherine did more than share in the fruits of the Divine Sacrifice. She really took part in its very acts. She used to say: "*Sometimes it seems to me that I am carrying the whole world in my heart, to offer it to God, whom I long to see glorified by the entire universe.*"

There was, we may say, no kind of physical or moral need for which she had not been called on for assistance. Tempests, inundations, conflagrations, accidents of every kind, political troubles, revolutions, duels, snares to entrap innocence, struggles against grace, purgatorial

sufferings, alternately became the object of her zeal and ardent prayer. She often felt herself borne to some far-off country, its name and distance unknown, though its surroundings were shown her. She used to arrive at the instant of some accident or the commission of some crime, and she was given to understand clearly the end of her interior efforts. People wholly unknown to her were shown her, and she was told that their preservation or return to God depended on her. She was given to understand that, by her union with Jesus suffering, she would merit for this or that one the grace of conversion, without which the sinner can neither know his miserable state nor desire to quit it. When returned to herself, her mind still under the influence of what she had seen and heard, if interrogated, she would answer simply: "I have seen some travellers in great peril. Fortunately, I arrived just in time to save them." . . . "Two sinners near their end were waiting for me. I knew that they would be saved," etc. . . . Sometimes she was in ignorance as to the object of her pains and prayers. Then Our Lord would say to her: "*It is enough to know that I shall apply thy sufferings according to My good pleasure.*" Again, pointing out a crowd of sinners several of whom bore a distinguishing mark, He would exclaim; "*I desire ardently to separate these from the crowd.*"

Sometimes the needs of souls were presented to her under a symbolical form. Now it was an abyss into which some sinner was, in an unguarded moment, about to precipitate himself. Upon its edge stood Satan, whose sight inspired her with horror, and with whom she had to dispute his prey. . . . Or it was the passions under the figure of a hideous animal with which she had to struggle, her only weapons being her faith and love. One

day, when she was expressing a vehement desire for the conversion of sinners, she was asked how she pleaded their cause before the Divine Master. "I begin my prayer with the most tender reproaches to our Divine Master. I say to Him: 'I do, indeed, see clearly that Thou dost offer Thy preventing grace to those prodigals, but, my God, is that enough? I want something more urgent from Thy mercy. What will avail a first step toward Thee, if they go no further? By that they prepare for themselves only a more rigorous judgment.'—While I was rashly uttering these complaints, I was suddenly transported to the road leading to Emmaus, along which I journeyed with the two disciples. I listened to their conversation, and their hearts were shown to me. I saw that they were weak, but simple and upright. They were so sincere in their regret over their lost hopes. Suddenly I saw Our Lord leaving a narrow pathway to join them. How I longed to say to them: 'Here is Jesus whom you have thought lost to you! His presence will change your sorrow into joy.'—But through respect, I kept silence. This scene, described in the Gospel, was fully enacted before my eyes. When it was over, Our Lord turned to me and said: '*It is thus that I act toward sinners. My first advances are more sensible in order to aid them to abandon their evil way. But far from leaving them to themselves, I walk by their side through life sweetly insinuating My word into their soul, which gives birth to the knowledge and the love of truth. Despite its apparent slowness, My grace incessantly tends to this end.*'"

By turns Sister Marie-Catherine made use of prayerful entreaties and zealous importunity to force God, as it were, to relax His justice toward certain souls. She tells

us that one night when unable to sleep, this thought came to her like a ray of light: “‘My good Saviour, if Thou wilt permit it, let us go visit the scene of Thy sufferings.’—My proposal was accepted, and we began our journey. When arrived at the Garden of Olives, all that He had endured was represented to me in the most vivid manner. I was seized with sorrow. ‘My good Jesus,’ I said to Him, ‘France has greatly offended Thee, I know. In return for Thy love of predilection, she has but bitterness for Thy Heart. I shall not try to excuse her. But didst Thou not shed here enough tears, sweat enough blood, to expiate her wanderings? Can it be said that she is more guilty than Thou art merciful?’”. . . In going over the road which separates the Garden of the Agony from Calvary, she paused at all the places that had been watered by the Blood of the Saviour, recalling to Him the cause of His sufferings, their extent, their value, and the disinterestedness with which He had endured them. “The Blood that Thou didst shed here, my Jesus, the humiliations with which Thou hast been drenched, are our good, are our treasure, far surpassing all that we could ask of Thee. Are not the pardon and the mercy which we supplicate Thy bounty to grant us, a right that we are permitted to use in order to disarm Thy justice? It is Thy own fault, O my God, if we become so bold, else why hast Thou made us so rich?” . . .

It was in strict union with Our Lord that she formulated the various requests that made up her prayer for all mankind. Her lively confidence raised her to the very Heart of God, and He was often pleased to give her the assurance that her prayer was heard. “Almost always,” she said, “when I pray for some need, I receive an interior assurance of the effect of my prayer. Then I say

without fear of being deceived: 'Thank God! The favor that you ask from His bounty has been granted.'"

Sister Marie-Catherine's zeal exercised a true apostolate, which was often carried to heroism. Her thirst for souls knew no bounds. It consumed her like an inward fire. Firmly convinced that the glory and prosperity of the Church of Christ rest on her saints, she constantly begged Almighty God to multiply fervent and generous souls. The obstacles which even those consecrated to the Lord oppose to His love, afflicted her sensibly. She traversed the earth in spirit, and at sight of the spiritual miseries that she met, there was nothing that she would not have undertaken to obtain for religious true devotedness to Our Lord. She often exclaimed: "Is it possible to think of self? Nothing so constrains the heart. Jesus has brought us here for the interests of His Divine Heart, and we are thinking of our own interests!" "*Love in this world*," she would repeat with St. Francis de Sales, "*should be crucified*." Sweetness unaccompanied by sacrifice, inspired her with fear. The seal of the Cross alone could reassure her. She begged nothing so much from God as the extension of His glory and the exaltation of His Church. Like her Holy Founder, she thought it her whole happiness in this world to spend her life and her labor in the service of Christ's true Spouse. Her zeal for the priesthood was ardent. The glorious mission of the priest, his power to draw upon the world justice or mercy, were shown her in so striking a way that she could not think of it without inexpressible fear. Sometimes it even threw her into a kind of agony. "Ah! if they knew what Our Lord expects of priests!" she would exclaim. "As for myself, I should wish to be ignorant of it. Their responsibility is in keeping with their

dignity and with the excessive love with which they have been favored. They shall render an account of the Blood of Jesus Christ placed in their hands for the salvation of souls, and, great God! what an account!". . . One day, there was shown her in vision, an immense plain covered with a multitude of people, representing the whole world. With an expression of deep sorrow, Our Lord singled out from among them priests unfaithful to their vocation. "I understood," she said, "that nothing is more keenly felt by His Heart, and for a long time I ceased not to pray and to suffer for their conversion." To obtain it, she called upon the Saviour Himself, conjuring Him, by all that is persuasive and pressing in love, to come to the help of those poor sinners. She tried to steal from the Divine Heart the charity that inflamed It, in order to pour it out upon His *Christs*, more largely redeemed by His Blood. She turned to the Blessed Virgin, and supplicated her under the title of *Mother of Sinners*, bought so dearly at the foot of the Cross, to come to their aid. Angels and saints were invoked in turn. Then leaving heaven, she went to purgatory, and begged the help of the souls there detained. "I beg you," she would say in her simplicity, "forget your own sufferings to save from eternal death those souls so dear to Our Lord." Then fearing to appear too requiring and too insensible to the fire that consumed them, she would pause a moment, and ask for them the dew of the Blood of Jesus Christ.

It was thus that this lover of the Crucified Saviour bore the Church in her heart, laboring, praying, and immolating herself for it. To help it was the passion of her life and the refreshment of her love.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Sister Marie-Catherine's Communications with the Church Suffering.

The Church Suffering, that portion of Christ's mystical Body so often neglected, came in for a large share of Sister Marie-Catherine's charity. Urged on by the thought of the pressing desire of her Spouse to unite Himself to the souls being cleansed in the purgatorial fire, she applied to them all the help that she could. She was generally warned interiorly whenever death was about to claim one of the Community. To the sign given her at such a time corresponded an interior conviction that never deceived. She used to inform the Superior-ess that God was going to demand a sacrifice, and then she remained in pious expectancy of the Divine Will. The sign was not a direct appeal to the senses, but a supernatural light, which made her aware of the approaching fact. Sometimes it would come under the form of a council of men held in the dormitory near the statue of St. Joseph; or two of our former Mothers, turning over the leaves of large books in the same place, and conferring on some important affair; or a servant-girl, only a fortnight dead, making a turn around a room, lantern in hand, as if seeking some lost object, while Sister Marie-Catherine was kneeling in prayer before a picture of the Sacred Heart; or Our Lord Himself with a gracious countenance, making the rounds of the refectory and pausing before each Sister, as if choosing a victim. Sister Marie-Catherine had a special attraction for assisting

the dying at the supreme moment. It was given her to see their struggles and their fears, to know the cause, and to understand the last efforts of the mercy of God, to procure for the dying means to accomplish some act demanded by His justice. We had in our Community a Sister Aggregate, whose agony was prolonged for eighteen hours. She seemed unable to die. Then Sister Marie-Catherine discovered by a light from On High, that God was awaiting from this lady the reparation of two acts of injustice done, however, without deliberation, and for which her advanced age might humanly speaking plead an excuse. As soon as Sister Marie-Catherine understood what God wanted of the dying one, she made it known to her before a witness, telling her to press her hand if she knew what she was saying to her. This she did, and died calmly a few instants after, leaving to her family the care of discharging her debt.

It was also granted to Sister Marie-Catherine to see the merciful justice of God exercised in the prolongation of a life, a prolongation inexplicable to human science. One of our Sisters having been notified that her father was in a dying state, hurried to commend him to the prayers of the good Sister. After praying for the intention, the latter said to her: "I have seen your father lying dead." Next day a letter was received, which contradicted the assertion, for the father was still alive twenty-four hours after she had pronounced him dead. The consequence was an impression of doubt regarding the good Sister's supernatural knowledge. In a tone of loving reproach, she addressed Our Lord: "Why, my God, hast Thou deceived me, and permitted that Sister N. should be deceived? What Thou didst reveal to me, I did not ask. Now, I beg of Thee either to tell me nothing, or to tell me the truth."—

"You said what was true," replied Our Lord. "He was dead. For a whole day, I held him suspended as it were between time and eternity, in order to dispose him to make an act necessary to secure his salvation." Full details were soon received from his family, confirming the extraordinary state of the deceased during twenty-four hours before death.

Sister Marie-Catherine witnessed, also, the last efforts of the demon to snatch from God a soul to whom there still remained one decisive choice of life or death. She saw the rage of the evil spirits, and heard their lying suggestions, intended to drown confidence and paralyze the grace of the Sacraments. Sometimes their number was legion around the dying, at the very moment of their last combat. They employed all the resources of their hellish ingenuity to accomplish their end, even to diminish merit, if they could not actually gain a victory. One of our Sisters lay dying. Around her bed, Sister Marie-Catherine saw a whole row of demons, threatening the poor Sister till she was frozen with terror. Sister Marie-Catherine knew that this soul was detained a month in purgatory, in expiation of the slight complacency that she felt at being esteemed by her Superioress.

The demon reserves his most formidable assaults for the supreme moment of death. How can we, poor, weak creatures, in those hours of inexpressible misery, support alone his audacious snares or escape his perfidy? But if those last hours are open to Satan's redoubled attacks, there are, also, no others in which Almighty God so lovingly surrounds the soul with His help. His succor is then proportioned to the need. He opens His Sacred Heart to the dying, and urges them to plunge into Its abysses. He pours over them the exhaustless

waters of His mercy, as if He regretted that they were so soon to cease for them. It is ordinarily through the sweet mediation of Mary that these wonders of grace are operated. Ah! there is nothing more tender than Mary's ministrations at the pillow of death! All that we have ever heard in life of her motherly assistance, is as naught compared with the reality. . . . Near the bed of another Sister in her agony, Sister Marie-Catherine saw a legion of devils, feigning to wait for her as their assured prey. The poor soul, uncertain as to whether she were of the number of the elect or not, lay in frightful agony. Suddenly the Blessed Virgin put an end to it by appearing to her with open arms, to receive and present her to her Judge.

As soon as ever the soul left the body, we beheld Sister Marie-Catherine become deeply recollected, annihilated, as it were, before God. "O Eternity!" she would exclaim. "What things you have revealed to her in one instant!"

She was at various times favored with great lights upon purgatory. "We cannot imagine how terrible that place is," she would say. "God's justice is there exercised in all its rigor, as it was upon Jesus on the Cross. His sanctity is inexorable, even the shadow of sin cannot exist in His presence. The pains of earth seem small after what I have seen in purgatory. I would not hesitate to pass through fire to efface the stains of my life." She beheld the nature and the intensity of its pains, and she could not rest until she had relieved and shortened them. How many souls owe to her that favor! Prayers, daily sacrifices, expiatory offerings of all kinds were made, to appease the Divine Justice and to hasten the hour of deliverance. When the priest who had so energetically

seconded her religious vocation died, her gratitude made her offer to undergo the pains of purgatory in his stead. She endured, in consequence, excessive pains in her head that night, followed by a copious sweat of blood, which was remarked by all who approached her bed. . . . Once, being in prayer, she heard the voice of a deceased Sister saying in her ear: "Sister, pray for me," and suddenly she saw her in purgatory, in a state of distress and abandonment that made her tremble. The poor Sister was detained there for a too sensible attachment to her family, and for a want of indifference in the use of remedies called for by her sufferings. It was revealed to Sister Marie-Catherine that the purification of this soul would be prolonged and rigorous in proportion to her want of correspondence to God's designs over her, although favored by special grace. Not only in the hours allotted to sleep and prayer, was Sister Marie-Catherine in direct communication with the suffering souls. They surrounded her, they followed her during her most absorbing occupations. She had assisted our Sister N. in her last moments, and she did not fail to make some remarks on her sweet and peaceful death. Our Blessed Lady, leaning over her bed, had shielded her in her arms from the attacks of Satan, whose hideous shadow alone was visible. Four days later, in one of the corridors, Sister Marie-Catherine felt herself forcibly pushed, but she attached no importance to it. A few hours after, as she was serving the pupils in the refectory, the same thing was repeated, and with such violence that she nearly fell over. Unable to hide her surprise, she turned and ask who had, perhaps, been the cause. "It was a soul from purgatory?" responded a little rogue. When she was pushed again for the third time, the Sister begged Our

Lord to make known to her the reason of it. Then the shadow of our dear Sister N. was projected on the wall, and her voice was heard saying: "I am suffering cruelly, and not until today have I been permitted to have recourse to your charity. I have still six weeks of rigorous purgatory to undergo."—"For what faults are you detained there?" asked the Sister.—"I am expiating my too great self-esteem, which led me to prefer myself to my Sisters on every occasion on which any of them received some mark of confidence from Superiors; also my interior revolts against authority, when it did not meet my desires, all this being in direct opposition to the humility and simplicity of our spirit. It is for this that Our Lord keeps me crushed as it were, under His feet. I have already experienced great relief from the prayers of the Community for me."—"You know," replied the Sister, "that all that I can dispose of, I am offering for you."—"That is not enough," said the soul. "Some special acts contrary to my faults, are necessary." Then she disappeared.

Sister Marie-Catherine knew that our Sister Marie-Philomène S. . . remained in purgatory only fifteen days, having been purified before her death by prolonged infirmity and great interior pains. Another soul of exemplary regularity was detained there three months for attachment to her own will.

A secular person, deceased, came once to ask Sister Marie-Catherine to offer some Communions for her, as she had lost several during life through her own negligence.

A certain Sister made to her the humble avowal that she had long been excluded from any participation in the suffrages of the Community, on account of her faults

against charity. Another of the rank of lay-sister, appeared to her in the choir. She was in flames and suffering most cruelly for having wished to make herself proprietress in her employment.

A few instants after her death, which took place on Holy Thursday, the venerable Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan appeared to Sister Marie-Catherine, and made known to her that her purgatory consisted only of the privation of the sight of God, her three weeks of agony before her death having accomplished the purification required by Divine Justice. During the Community Mass on Holy Saturday, she touched Sister Marie-Catherine on the shoulder with the words: "I am going to heaven."

Mother Marie-Thérèse Dorr, after an attack of sickness, was so weak as to rouse serious apprehension. Our Lord, according to His wont, addressed Himself to His spouse of predilection, our Sister Marie-Catherine, assuring her that the good Mother was not then going to die, although her death would precede her own. Four years later, occurred the accident which took her from us. Sister Marie-Catherine witnessed her last combats, and helped to soothe her passage from time to eternity. "I did not see the demons," she said, "but I felt them. They were full of rage at seeing themselves powerless over so beautiful a soul." Eleven days after, Mother Marie-Thérèse appeared to her, and said: "Tomorrow Sister Marie-Alexis will die, and I shall ascend to heaven." The first part of the prediction was verified, and we fully believe that the second was fulfilled, also.

A few hours before the death of one of our Sisters, we heard Sister Marie-Catherine promising to ask the Viscountess de Brossin de Méré, a friend and benefactress of our Community, for some Masses for her repose.

When the supreme moment came, standing at the foot of the bed, her eyes fixed upon the dying one, Sister Marie-Catherine was imploring mercy for her so soon to appear before the justice-seat. Suddenly she perceived a shadow on the wall, but she could not determine its form. Then she heard a voice uttering these words, which left her in doubt as to whether to hope or to fear: "She is mine!"—Was it a good or an evil spirit that spoke? Her state of doubt and anguish was prolonged until the funeral Mass. While praying earnestly for the deceased, she had a vision. She saw rising from some ruins a dense cloud of smoke. It parted at the summit, and disclosed the deceased Sister consumed by fire. "Sister!" she cried to Sister Marie-Catherine, "I beg you to have said as soon as possible the four Masses that you promised me." Not being able to see the Vicountess de Brossin de Méré, who was then at her chateau, Sister Marie-Catherine begged the Superioress to advance the stipend for the Masses. At the same moment, a letter was received from the Vicountess who, though knowing nothing of the promise, directed her to have four Masses said for the deceased. Six months after, on the Feast of the Assumption, the deceased Sister appeared again, and said: "I am saved, and I owe my deliverance to the Blessed Virgin and St. Anne." Then rising in glory, she said: "What are all the sorrows of earth compared with the happiness of seeing God for even one instant!"—On another occasion, Sister Marie-Catherine beheld a yawning abyss, in which purgatory lay unveiled before her. On its brink stood our angelic Sister Marie-Alphonse N. . . , clothed in white, her hands joined, and begging prayers. There seemed to be no fire in this place, only profound obscurity and indescribable desolation.

Sister Marie-Alphonse was detained there for certain negligences, faults against poverty, and a want of simplicity in asking the usual permissions. Her punishment was the privation of the sight of God. No one on earth can conceive even a faint idea of that punishment. Yearning to approach the Sovereign Good, whose beauty so powerfully attracted her, she felt the weight of the Divine Hand, which for some days longer kept her at a distance.

Many souls are condemned to expiate their faults in the very place in which had they been committed. Sister Marie-Catherine witnessed the rigorous punishment inflicted upon them by Divine Justice. A postulant for the rank of lay-sister, but of too imperious a character, was dismissed after a trial of several months. When, in 1832, the terrible scourge of cholera desolated our city, she came and offered her services to the Community. We received her as a gift from God. Regardless of her health and without fear of trouble, she remained day and night at the bedside of the Sisters stricken by the contagion. Four of them succumbed to the disease, leaving as many places empty. We thought that we could not better recompense the heroic devotedness of our former postulant than by admitting her a second time to the novitiate. We hoped that, with the help of grace and past experience, she would become more tractable. This was, however, demanding an impossibility from so rebellious a character. Insensibly her nature resumed its empire, and many were the faults against humility and charity that escaped her in her communications with the Sisters, God having called her to Himself, Sister Marie-Catherine saw her suffering cruelly, and she often had to do violence to herself, in order to pass near those places in which she

knew that she would meet her. Sometimes she saw her in the assembly room, kissing the floor before the Superior's place in reparation for the words of disapproval and murmuring she had uttered. Again, she saw her following our processions, looking so dejected, so annihilated, that our good Sister could not help exclaiming: "O my God, how heavy is the hand of Thy justice, how penetrating the light of Thy truth!". . . After a year of expiation in the monastery, she appeared for the last time to our dear Sister. Her sufferings had been notably diminished by the prayers of the Community. Her head was under the Cross of Our Lord, but she did not make known the moment of her deliverance. The sacristy was the place of expiation for another Sister. She was condemned to it for having on several occasions failed in the respect due the priestly character, on account of some imperfections inherent in human nature. Sister Marie-Catherine saw her in a most humble posture, bowing profoundly before the priest, and making reparation to him every time that, clothing himself with the sacerdotal vestments, he prepared to discharge the functions of his ministry. "No one can conceive," the soul said to her, "the annihilation that I have to suffer in expiation of my fault."

From the instant of her death, Sister Marie-Paul G. . . was in close and constant communication with Sister Marie-Catherine. The latter said, "I do not see her, but I feel her. O if you knew how sweet and kind she is to me!" On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, fifteen days after her demise, our dear Sister said: "She is not yet delivered, but soon she will be. She is already heavenly-looking." On the seventeenth day of the month, Sister Marie-Catherine was attacked by violent neuralgic

pains, which she offered for our deceased Sister. Soon she heard the following words addressed to her: "I thank you for your prayers, but they are no longer necessary." Fearing to be deceived by her imagination, she replied: "Give me some sign, if you please, to assure me of the truth of your words." Then Sister Marie-Paul appeared to her just as she was before her death. Then she was gradually clothed with new beauty, until she became transparent and glorified.

One of our pupils, favored with a religious vocation, was unexpectedly withdrawn from school, to prevent her following it. She quietly resigned herself to her new life, which brought her ample opportunity for satisfying her inclinations to vanity. But to detach her from her seductive surroundings, Almighty God struck her two painful blows. Her mother was carried off by a grave sickness, and a month later her father followed her. The mighty voice of God was recognized in the death of her nearest and dearest, and the young orphan returned to her first attraction. But the grace accorded her had been weakened, and the moment she crossed the threshold of the convent, sadness and anguish took possession of her soul. God in His goodness came to her aid. How great was her astonishment to hear from the lips of the Superior just before she entered the walls of the enclosure these words: "Your mother approves your determination. She appeared yesterday resplendent with glory to Sister Marie-Catherine, and said to her: 'Courage, my child! God will be thy recompense!'"

Our scholars, when overtaken by an early death, not only had recourse to our good Sister, but even followed her for a longer or a shorter time, as the case might be. She felt them around her wherever she was or

however employed. She often heard rapping near her bed at night followed by the well known voice of some child saying: "Pray for me!" Their visits generally coincided with the moment of their death, of which she was sometimes made aware by a blow. One of our scholars was obliged to return home on account of ill-health. Typhoid soon developed, and her parents in hope and fear anxiously awaited the result. Two days before the crisis, our Sister saw during her evening meditation, a cortège of young girls in white following a bier to the grave. A wreath of white roses lay on the casket, and the procession was winding along by a river. It was not long before we received the news of the child's death. The foregoing details, as related by Sister Marie-Catherine, were perfectly verified.

When in her last years, Sister Marie Catherine alluded to these mysterious communications, she used to say: "I see more in the invisible than in the visible world. My thoughts are recalled to earth only by duty. I am in close and constant communication with our deceased Sisters. They often appear to me. I see them with an intellectual view. Whether they express themselves by word or gesture, I receive from it a sensible effect altogether above nature, and which I cannot explain. I see that they draw from the Precious Blood of Jesus the power that is applied by me. I speak to them of what is the object of all my desires, and that is, of what interests the glory of God. Apart from that glory, I feel only indifference for all things. This warns me that the hour of my death is not far off. While awaiting it, I know only how to love."

CHAPTER XXV.

The War and the Ambulance.

To the privilege granted Sister Marie-Catherine of glancing into the sombre region of purgatorial sufferings, Our Lord added another not less remarkable, that of raising the veil of the future, to discover its secrets to His faithful servant.

On June 16, 1870, Feast of Corpus Christi, Our Sister appeared in the choir as if rapt in ecstasy. On leaving the holy place, she sought the Superioress and said to her: "Mother, I have just seen Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. He was in His adorable Humanity, all radiant with light, His arms open and stretched out to us."—"Perhaps, it was to invite us to go to Him," said the Mother.—"No, Mother. He seemed to be extending them and closing them, as if to make me understand: *It is thus that I shall one day protect you all from danger.*" What was this danger to be? No one, not even Sister Marie-Catherine herself, had any presentiment of it. There was then no question of war. The first words that presaged it were pronounced in the Chamber only on the 8th of July, and it was not till the 15th of the same month that it was declared against Prussia, and published in Paris. It is not for us to dwell on the vicissitudes of that sad war. We shall, in few words, refer only to certain facts that seem necessary to throw light on our story.

The first moments were full of anxiety, since our proximity to the frontier exposed us to imminent peril. Three weeks elapsed before hostilities began. During them a

religious movement seemed to pass over our brave people, whose secret power made them resolve to conquer or to die like Christians. They begged for scapulars and medals, and they frequented the confessionals. We know not which to admire the more, the patient zeal of God's ministers or the piety of our valiant soldiers.

Once more, we were obliged to dismiss our pupils and close our school. Sister Marie-Catherine now became in a special manner our Moses. Two of our pupils unable to return to their homes, shared our disquietude for several weeks. At the earliest opportunity, we sent them to our first convent of Paris, knowing that they would there receive a cordial reception. Communication was extremely difficult. After two days and a night of travelling in a wagon with very little to eat, the young exiles found at the railway station only some army bread left by the soldiers. They were, indeed, happy when Mother Jeanne-Charlotte Millon opened to them the doors of the convent. Soon, however, their situation became as perilous as our own, and for months we were in ignorance of their fate. One of them was an orphan and very delicate. She had been with us from the age of five, and had received from Sister Marie-Catherine the most tender care and affection. Those days of painful uncertainty were extremely harrowing to our dear Sister, for Our Lord did not enlighten her upon the subject of her anxiety. At last, through a Superioress of our Institute, we received the news so longed-for. Our two exiles had been received into our Community of Orleans with the same cordiality tendered them in Paris, and under circumstances that doubled our gratitude. When our convents heard of our troubles, many offered us a home. Their desire to help us was so great that it seemed as if

the obligation was on their side. They would take no refusal. They declared that the walls of their convents would expand to make room for all. Our holy Foundress, Mother de Chantal, would surely have pressed to her lips and heart the letters that we received during those days. We shall never forget them.

But for us to leave our enclosure, would require an order from military authority; and, indeed, there was a time when we feared that we should receive one. To the fears of her Superioress, however, Sister Marie-Catherine continued to reply: "No, Mother, we shall not leave our convent. Our Lord promised me that."—O what a comfort she was to the Mother Superioress during this disastrous period! Prayer, heaven-born encouragement, enlightened charity to take upon herself the most disagreeable part of certain negotiations—these she claimed as her own share along with all other cares and difficulties. Her filial devotedness was unparalleled. At whatever moment her Superioress called upon her, she always found her ready. The joyous smile that lit up her honest face seemed to say: "I thank you for having counted on me!" For nine consecutive days, it was our privilege to have Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament. How ardently we adored our Eucharistic Jesus, and endeavored to avert Divine Justice! Many of the citizens and even some of the soldiers came to unite their prayers with ours in begging help from the God of armies, and that, above all, at the evening Benediction, when the chanting of the *Miserere* with the *Parce, Domine!* infused into all souls the spirit of penance and reparation. From that time, we took our station daily at the foot of the tabernacle and before the little shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. A light, emblematic of our persevering supplications,

burned day and night. What shall we say of Sister Marie-Catherine's fervent recourse to that Divine Mother? Her ardor increased with our trials. All miseries, moral and physical, she assumed as hers by right, and hers it was, also, to knock with invincible confidence at the door of Mary's compassionate heart.

The enemy's advance was rapid. They were nearing Metz. At noon, August 14th, the cannon's deafening roar filled us with dread. Near the village of Borny, a terrible battle took place. How solemn the thought that every discharge opened the portals of eternity to numbers! Our Community passed the whole night in prayer, the firing continuing until a late hour in the morning. On the 16th, a second battle, was fought near Gravelotte, and on the 18th, another at Amanvillers, both more terrible than the first. The army, arrested in its march upon Verdun, was obliged to fall back upon Metz, and soon the German forces infested all parts. Our Mother, feeling a presentiment that we would be ordered to establish an ambulance in our convent, had written to Mgr. du Pont des Loges on the morning of the 17th. She reminded him of the rigor of our Rule regarding inclosure, and that the annals of the Visitation afford no precedent for such infractions. But in case of its being forcibly imposed on us, she humbly solicited his authorization in writing, as she herself dared not assume so grave a responsibility. Sister Marie-Catherine, seeing the active steps taken by her Superioress to avert what all the Religious of the city were dreading, said to her with a very expressive gesture, "Mother, I think it is the will of God, and no human power can avert it. And is not His will the first of all laws?"—Two hours later, several vehicles stopped before our door. The

officer in command called for admittance by virtue of an order from military authority, and threatened to fire the convent if we refused. The delay consequent on obtaining the Bishop's permission, exasperated the excited populace, whose shouts reached our ears. Our good Bishop, despite his energetic resolve to maintain the rights of the Community in their integrity, was forced to yield to the urgency of the situation. On his word, we opened our doors to the unhappy victims of the slaughter. Later on, His Lordship said smilingly to our Mother: "You wanted to lay all the responsibility on me. But the good God, that it might not prove too heavy, was pleased to express His will by the voice of events. It was too imperious for us not to obey."

During this tumult, which contrasted so strangely with the habitual peace and silence of the cloister, Sister Marie-Catherine remained before the sacred tabernacle. Where could she better attend to the interests of her Community? As soon as the wounded were brought in, she was sent for, and she joyfully hurried to the post assigned her. In less than an hour, the study-hall, the dormitory, the children's refectory were occupied by fifty-eight hastily arranged beds. When about four o'clock that evening, the good Bishop presented himself to encourage and console our new guests, he found our academy changed into a hospital.

One hall containing twenty-four of the wounded, fell to the care of Sister Marie-Catherine. She took its direction, and provided for everything with astonishing self-possession. The care of dressing the wounds, administering the remedies, and clothing the patients, with the thousand other duties consequent on her charge, filled her days without interrupting her repose in God. She

had hardly entered upon her new functions when her health improved, and vigor quite unusual to her accompanied every duty. The soldiers, as formerly the pupils, soon felt the influence of her sympathetic kindness. They gathered around her, they plied her with questions, each having some relief to ask, some fear, some desire to express. She had a word of encouragement, a kindly smile for all. In return she obtained from them all that she wished. Only on one occasion did she show herself severe. She had heard some one blaspheme. God was offended! How could she restrain her indignation! Forgetful of the nature and the quality of her audience, she said to them in a grave voice: "The first among you that repeats that fault must kiss the ground for penance." After the burst of merriment, aroused by this new form of military discipline, all promised to correct. When through force of habit blasphemous words rose to their lips, they checked them with the words: "Hush! that will pain Sister Marie-Catherine!"—One day she threatened a sergeant that she would not visit him again, on account of his carelessness of certain directions she had given him. Making an effort to rise, he said to her in a grave, almost solemn, tone: "All right! After I die, I shall come back *to see you*."—"Ah! take care!" she replied, checking his rash promise.

Our Lord deigned sometimes to mingle His sweets with the bitterness of daily sacrifice. Our new guests continued to edify us by their patience and by the good spirit they evinced, generally the forerunner of conversion of life. At an early date three of their number died fortified by the helps of religion. Every day, and above all on Sunday, the convalescents assisted at the Holy Sacrifice in our exterior chapel, while the others recited in

their beds the prayers of the Divine Office. The worthy priest who daily visited them, set no bounds to his care and devotedness. Fifteen days after the erection of the hospital, he conceived the idea of saying Holy Mass in the midst of the wounded, and giving Holy Communion to those that desired it. Thanks to the aid of the Blessed Virgin, whom we had invoked to carry out this pious project, it succeeded marvellously. The following Sunday, September 4th, the large hall was transformed into a chapel, and around the improvised altar all our brave soldiers gathered for Holy Mass. The ceremony began by so touching an exhortation that many of the invalids shed tears. During the Holy Sacrifice, they sang canticles composed for the occasion. But how describe the solemn moment of Communion? Over a third of them had the happiness to receive in profound reverence our adorable Saviour whose conquest they were. We saw them filled with silent joy born of the Divine Presence. May they never forget that sweet religious feast! That was a happy day for Sister Marie-Catherine who had left nothing undone to render the Eucharistic Banquet as solemn as possible. With what lively faith she saw to the least details, in order to make ready for the Divine Guest a Cenacle worthy of Him!

She was ingenious in discovering means of relief for her poor wounded, and with it she was mindful to mingle salutary thoughts. Seated at their bedside, she would recall to them the happy day of their First Communion and the advice of their mother. She would then exhort them to make a good use of their cross, speak to them of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and turn their mind to the death that was, perhaps, hovering near. She prepared them for the last Sacraments, and stayed by them

in their last moments. With heartfelt joy she reckoned up the fruits of her zeal. Nine of the wounded returned to the Faith of their childhood, and crowned their life by a Christian death.

The country was pillaged by marauders, desolated by fire, and threatened with famine and pestilence. Numbers of unburied dead lay around the city, and deep gloom fell upon the survivors. In these trying events we cast upon God alone the anchor of our hope, and tried to multiply our acts of love, confidence, and fidelity. When we pressed Sister Marie-Catherine to ask for a sign upon which we could surely rely, she would say: "Yes, Sisters, I am praying with all my heart. But I do not dare ask deliverance from the evils that weigh upon our country. Ah! of whom shall Our Lord demand suffering by way of reparation, if not of us, His spouses?" We felt encouraged by her unvarying serenity despite the painful situation, whose issue none could foresee. Her sweet heavenly peace, her very silence, suggested the thought: God is with us!

September 12th brought great excitement in the city. Circulars were distributed by the exchanged prisoners full of events of the highest importance. They told the sad story of the French army defeated at Sedan, the imprisonment of Napoleon III. in the Grand Duchy of Hesse-Cassel, the fall of the Empire and the Republic proclaimed, the peace proposal, first act of the provisional government, and the onerous conditions imposed upon our poor France. O the incertitude then added to our inquietude! The following day confirmed the sad news. We could no longer doubt the extreme danger to our city, the reverses of our army, and the establishing of a Republic. Dear France, humbled under the mighty

hand of God, we forgot our own sorrows to weep over thine! . . .

Our Lord deigned to bless the care lavished on our poor sick, and to heal the wounds of most of them. When the convalescent were recalled to camp, our hospital was decreased by a third. Before the departure of the men, the touching ceremony of the 4th of September was renewed, and Holy Mass celebrated in the study-hall. Twenty-four of the soldiers received Holy Communion, and so great was the devotion of all that the heart of their indefatigable apostle overflowed with gratitude and joy. He assured us that, having been able to judge of the work of grace in those souls, he counted many sincere and striking conversions.

October, month of the holy angels, began, and brought with it the comforting thought, that the celestial host with Mary at their head, would arm themselves in our defense. But God's time had not yet come. The fifth of this month is one of our most cherished anniversaries, namely, that of the foundation of the monastery. The pious joy of the yearly celebration gave place this time to loving submission in the midst of trials. The citizens and the army had food for only five or six days. The municipal authorities, in the hope of finding provisions, instituted a rigorous search among the inhabitants. A large quantity of our flour was carried off. The misery of the poor was frightful. Their hands were extended in supplication for a morsel of bread, which could be procured only at an exorbitant price. Contagious disease was added to hunger. Reduced to extreme distress, Metz had nought to rely upon but the patriotism of its people, the fidelity of its soldiers, and the prayers of Christian hearts. Capitulation seemed the only alternative, but the populace loud-

ly cried for delay. Sister Marie-Catherine's confidence was not shaken for one moment. "Mother," she used to repeat to her Superioress, "Our Lord is protecting us. . . . Can we fear? . . . , His arms are open to us, His Heart is our buckler. What, then, can harm us?"

Many things concurred on these sad days to cloud our horizon. On the 28th, the elements seemed unchained, the rain fell in torrents, and the wind blew violently. Buildings were shaken, roofs torn off. It seemed as if the tempest were about to level all things, as if the infernal legions were carrying on a desperate combat in the air. It was during this frightful storm that our immense sacrifice was consummated. Our resources were exhausted, our hope well-nigh fled. Our poor army, which for the last two months had been camping at the gates of the city, presented a heart-rending sight. Without shelter, exposed day and night to the drenching rains, the unfortunate soldiers had no place to rest but on the wet ground. They had no bread. Their only nourishment was the small ration of corn, which they ground themselves, and then they traversed the streets imploring help of the passers-by. Metz itself could have maintained its position some days longer, but the capitulation of the army without that of the city, would not be accepted.

October 28th was the sad day which severed us, alas! from our country. Consternation was general. We, too, shared in the universal grief, for religion supernaturalizes, without weakening, the noble sentiments of the soul. Our hearts detaching themselves from a land no longer ours, rose toward the unchangeable sojourn of heavenly beatitude, and with the faith of the Apostle we exclaimed: "*We have not here a lasting city.*" On the 29th, at noon, the victors took possession of the forts of the city.

How painfully the triumphant and joyous music of the Prussians contrasted with the general gloom!

Our worthy Bishop, after obtaining that his religious communities should be exempt from any further harboring of soldiers, was himself subjected to a bitter trial. On November 5th, a letter from the Prussian Governor announced to him that, on the following day, they would make use of his Cathedral for their Protestant service. In a reply, which was a master-piece of etiquette, of noble firmness, and lively faith, His Lordship conveyed to the Governor a decided refusal. Thank God, the matter was allowed to drop. The next Governor expressed to the saintly Prelate his regret at the action of his predecessor. Every Catholic heart, that had trembled with indignation at the thought of profanation to their time-honored basilica, now returned thanks to God. Sister Marie-Catherine's gratitude was proportioned to the sorrow she had felt at even the thought of such desecration.

We now hoped to return to the observance of inclosure. But the hour marked by Providence had not yet struck. Our improvised hospital, which had been relieved of two-thirds of its wounded, was reinforced by the poor sick soldiers left lying under the tents in the esplanade. Christian charity made it a duty to receive them. Sister Marie-Catherine's compassion was again aroused, and even more keenly than before, on account of the wretched conditions of the sufferers. No need of theirs escaped her clear-sighted charity.

One of our sweetest consolations during our time of trial, was the cordial sympathy of our different convents. Their affectionate letters were often quite providential. The first that reached us was from the dear source of our holy Order, our monastery of Annecy. We know

not how to express the heartfelt joy and gratitude that it awoke in our hearts. The news from many of our Houses, however, filled us with sorrow. Had the knowledge of their trials been vouchsafed Sister Marie-Catherine? We cannot say, but we had reason to judge that she had, at least, some insight regarding them. She often exclaimed: "O how much we ought to pray for our whole Institute! Our own trials seem to us great, but who knows whether those of our other Houses are not still greater?"—Very earnest was her desire for the news of our various Houses affected by the war, and her prayers for them were fervent and continual.

The short retreat preparatory for the Feast of the Presentation, November 21st, began, and we hoped that Our Lord would in it give rest to our souls. But not so. The three days of retreat were taken up with preparations for the departure of the wounded soldiers and the Feast itself was to close with sacrifice. Early morn saw our guests cross the threshold of our cloister, happy in the thought of once more seeing their own homes. Some delay in the railroad arrangements brought them back to our door again that evening. It was opened to them while we kissed the hand that sent them to us. Our Lord wished, no doubt, to test our fidelity, for had we not that very day renewed our sacred vows? Again did our generous Sister Marie-Catherine repeat: *My heart is ready, O my God, my heart is ready!* Our little hospital was not definitely closed till November 27th, which proved the first Sunday in Advent that year. On taking leave, the invalids expressed their gratitude in the most touching manner. They never forgot the care that had been lavished on them, and many wrote their acknowledgements to our Superioress. Some whose health did not allow an

immediate return to their homes, were taken to a hospital in the city where, owing to its crowded condition, they had to be accommodated in a cold, dark attic. Ah, what privations were theirs! We tried to send them many little comforts by our out-sisters.

On December 8th, 1870, Feast of the Immaculate Conception, our dear Sister saw, after Holy Communion, the Blessed Virgin enveloped in a large mantle, which she spread over all our convents, also over a great number of families, several of whom were unknown to her. At the same time she received an assurance that all would be protected. On the first Friday of December, 1871, the same favor was renewed, this time accompanied with a formal promise of protection. "I saw the adorable Person of Our Lord," she said, "extending His arms toward the Community as He had done on June 16, 1870, in order to assure us of His protection. I heard no word. But an inward certainty was given me that we should have nothing to fear, because Our Lord would be with us in the day of peril. Again I learned that it would be the Blessed Virgin who would save us."—This hope gave her such supernatural strength that she cried out: "I no longer wonder at the courage of the martyrs. The grace that they receive is so remarkable that they seem to act not of themselves. Mother, there is nothing to fear, since we are no longer our own either to act or to suffer."

Some months were necessary to restore cleanliness and order to that part of our academy that had been used for the hospital. Weary of the past troublous days, we longed for the rest of silence and retreat, after which we thought of recalling the pupils that had left us at the opening of the war. Matured by the various trials they had witnessed, disabused of many illusions, strengthened

by the filial share they had born in the disasters of their parents, our children returned to us with a more serious appreciation of the happiness bestowed by a solid, Christian education; and Sister Marie-Catherine resumed her duties among them as if nothing had ever interrupted them.

This sad period was fruitful in sacrifice for us. The ground under our feet was unsteady, and we could not hide the fact from ourselves. The best families of Metz abandoned their homes now become for them alien. The future was uncertain. The atmosphere laden with storms, weighed upon all hearts. The hour soon came for the realization of the worst fears, and the Religious Orders fell under the ban of proscription. The Jesuit Fathers, esteemed and loved by the whole city, closed their magnificent college. What sentiments stirred numerous hearts!—filial regrets on the part of pupils, painful anxiety on that of parents, sublime resignation on that of the proscribed! The various Communities of Metz that had experienced the zeal and devotedness of the Fathers were deeply grieved at their expulsion. They wept on seeing those valiant champions of Holy Church ostracized, their tears flowing not so much for themselves as for the interests of religion, which ever finds in them her best support. Consternation was general, yet Christian hope was at the bottom of every heart.

Did Sister Marie-Catherine remain an idle spectator of the misfortunes that so gravely compromised the glory of God? Ah, no! She complained to Him with confidence that grew stronger with the gravity of the situation. She implored Him to avert the fatal consequences of the decree that banished the religious. But though earnest her prayer, it pleased Our Lord to turn a deaf ear. It

was the hour of justice, and nothing could stay its course. We remember Sister Marie-Catherine's tender devotion toward the Holy Eucharist. From It she now received a most sensible favor. She knew how agreeable to God is the offering of the Divine Victim, especially by the hands of those that, by entire self-immolation, had become identified as it were with His Sacrifice. She knew the virtue of such an offering as a treasure of grace for the just, as expiation for the guilty, and as a means of salvation for all. She could not, therefore, behold without profound sorrow our city despoiled of its inappreciable spiritual goods.

But a change was not slow to come in God's good time. On the Feast of the Assumption, 1872, while still sorrowing over the departure of those holy religious, our Sister was in prayer before the Blessed Virgin. Her very fervor roused our inquietude as to the fate awaiting us. Suddenly the Divine Mother appeared to her. "Her whole bearing," said she, "invited confidence, I prayed fervently for our Community and, seeing Our Lady so sweet and kind, I earnestly commended to her the whole Institute. Then Our Lord soon appeared in His Sacred Humanity. I have never seen the Blessed Virgin that her presence was not the assured announcement of that of our sweet Saviour. Everything was then discussed between the Son and the Mother. What had I to say? It was for me to remain apart in my nothingness. I saw a great number of Visitandines kneeling in a plain, their faces turned toward the holy apparition. The Blessed Virgin pointed them out to her Son with the words: '*Behold the daughters of Blessed Francis de Sales who claim Thy protection!*'—and Our Lord replied with ineffable

sweetness: '*I shall extend My protection to all now before Me.*'"

CHAPTER XXVI.

Other Prophetic Visions of Sister Marie-Catherine.

The supernatural manifestation of hidden truths or divine secrets, which we have already met in some isolated facts, we shall now consider in its relation to the conduct of God toward the prevaricators of His law, and to the terrible chastisements exercised by His divine justice not only upon individuals, but also upon the masses.

Some visions, three of them anterior to that related at the close of the preceding chapter, were of a nature to strengthen Sister Marie-Catherine's confidence by their promise of special protection. How much she had prayed for her Community! After God and the interests of His glory, there was not in her soul a more lively feeling than her love for her Community. Most of these visions, however, seemed intended to excite in her a spirit of reparation. The political world was absolutely apart from the communications received by the humble Sister. On December 3, 1871, Our Lord deigned to show her the new era which was to end the reign of His justice. "I was in the refectory," she said, "mentally asking pardon of Our Lord for allowing myself during some moments to be distracted from His presence. The Divine Saviour appeared to me, and said with incomparable sweetness: '*Ah! As for Me, I am always thinking of*

thee! and extending His arms, He exclaimed: '*Look!*' Then I saw a great multitude assembled in a vast plain, above which hung lowering clouds. Soon a furious storm burst forth. There was no shelter in which to take refuge, and the thunderbolts killed many. The survivors, more dead than alive, prepared themselves for the same fate. Gradually, however, the tempest calmed, the sky cleared, and a magnificent country, clothed in the richest vegetation, spread out before my eyes. I had never before seen anything so beautiful in our sad world. I thought it a picture of the terrestrial Paradise, such as it was before the fall of man. I passed from enchantment to enchantment, forgetful of by-gone fears; but clouds again covered the sky, and presaged a still more frightful storm. In a few instants, darkness enveloped the earth, and sinister flashes shot through the sky, rendering the obscurity still more appalling. Then it was revealed to me that I had seen a picture of poor France. Days of trial, of terror and fright, were about to commence. But they were soon to be followed by a wonderful triumph for religion, such as had never before been seen. Its duration, however, was to be short!' . . . After having permitted our humble Sister to cast a rapturous glance upon the magnificent picture of divine mercy, Our Lord made her hear the voice of His justice, filling her soul with holy fear at the thought of the rigor with which He claims His rights.

On January 15, 1872, during the Community Mass, Sister Marie-Catherine was praying for France. "*My people are not converted,*" said Our Lord to her. "*For this reason they shall feel the whole weight of My justice. Only after having satisfied it, shall they again become the objects of My mercy.*" These words pierced her heart like a sword while, at the same time, they enlightened

her upon the mission of religious for the salvation of the world. She was so penetrated by them that all her words became a pressing incentive to prayer and to an ever more perfect self-surrender. "Ah! let us give all! Let us pray! Prayer, accompanied by sacrifice, disarms Our Lord. It changes the decrees of Heaven. We do not know how great is our power over God Himself."

These visions were repeated during the Carnival. On February 12, 1872, Sunday of the Forty Hours, Sister Marie-Catherine laid before Our Lord the evils of the Church, and supplicated Him to take pity on the world. The Divine Saviour appeared to her and said: "*My people multiply their outrages. Behold to what a state they have reduced My Heart,*" and He showed her His Divine Heart torn and bleeding. "*I will give My grace to this ungrateful people only when, by their prayers and good works, they shall have healed My wounds and appeased My justice.*" — "Then," said our Sister, "I understood two things: the first, that the moment of our deliverance was not so near as we had supposed, and that it was to be preceded by terrible chastisements; the second, that every soul is called to take part in the sufferings that go to make up a great expiation. I was distracted at this moment by a croup-like cough, which seemed to come from the pupils' tribune. Anxiety, of which I could not rid myself, seized me, and I rose to go to the relief of the little sufferer. But Our Lord said to me: '*Stay where thou art. It is My enemy, who is trying to divert thee from My presence.*'—The ruse unmasked, the cough ceased."

One of the chief points of our devoted Sister's mission was to present herself before God as an advocate for sinners, and to plead their cause with all the arguments that

her ardent charity suggested. Sometimes, however, we saw her silently submitting to the decrees of Divine Justice. Then she was mute, abandoned and annihilated in adoration, powerless to formulate a prayer to the contrary. On the Feast of the Visitation, 1873, an immense plain spread out before her eyes. It was covered with an incalculable multitude of religious virgins belonging to all Orders. In the midst of them, she recognized our Mother Marie-Thérèse de Tholozan, the Foundress of our convent. It was given her to understand that the Church Triumphant was uniting with the Church Militant to soften God's wrath. "*My arms are so heavy,*" said Our Lord, "*I can no longer support them,*" and as they fell, they described an oblique line, as if to keep us apart. Below she saw a compact mass of black heads, frightful to see, and she knew that they were the impious. "O God!" she exclaimed. "What prayer will appease Thy just anger?"—" *That of the Garden of Olives!*" was the response.

One day in June, 1874, a letter was being read in the refectory from Blessed Margaret Mary to Mother M. Françoise de Saumaise. In it was a formal demand of Our Lord that France should be consecrated to His Heart by a solemn vow. Suddenly Our Lord appeared to Sister Marie-Catherine, and showed her His Sacred Heart surrounded by flames. From the tips of the flames, sheaves of wheat seemed to be springing, and bending to the ground by their own weight. Our Sister did not understand the signification of this symbol, but she did not allow her mind to dwell on what God was not pleased to discover to her. She annihilated herself and adored. The next day, Our Lord appeared to her a second time in the same place and under the same figure. The

sheaves alone were missing. Jesus said: "*I have willed to make known to thee by this sign the efficacy of so many prayers that ascend to Me.*"

The accounts of the persecution raging in Germany, and ever on the increase, against the Religious Orders, the heart-rending scenes daily witnessed by their expulsion from their native land, and their frequently unsuccessful efforts to find shelter in a more hospitable country, cast a gloom over all Catholic hearts. In our compassion for those unhappy victims, to whom the bond of religion united us so closely, was mingled a personal sentiment as to whether or not the same sentence of expatriation awaited ourselves. Should we not in our turn, perhaps, find ourselves exiles some day? Full of these apprehensions, the Superioress told Sister Marie-Catherine to ask Our Lord whether He would be pleased to guard our cloister. The answer to her question, asked in holy obedience, was, that we should never be forced to leave it. "My God?" she responded with inimitable simplicity, "how can I be sure that it is Thyself speaking to me? Give me a sign, please!"—and as she spoke, she fell on her knees, kissed the ground, and arose without assistance, actions that she had found absolutely impossible for several years past, and which she never afterward was able to repeat.

On March 24, 1875, Our Lord repeated to her the assurance of His special presence with us in the day of trial. These were His loving words: "*I carry you all in My Heart.*" The very next day came the appalling report of the project to suppress all the convents in our country. In His goodness, Our Lord had warned our Sister of it, in order to mitigate its painful effect. The law was never carried into effect.

About this time, Our Lord showed her His people ranged in two camps on an immense plain. The wicked formed a compact mass; they were far more numerous than the good. The latter held lighted torches. A beautiful, bright light was diffused around by the fervent; while a weak and flickering flame betokened the lukewarm and the wavering in faith. "Soon I saw a part of the latter pass to the other side, and then their torches went out altogether," said our Sister. "Some tried to return to where they were at first, their torches still glimmering. But what sufferings, what obstacles, what dangers they had to encounter! O how difficult it is for the soul that has abandoned the good way to reenter it, and how small is the number to whom this grace is granted!"

On April 18, 1875, she was given to see a great stretch of country, and off in the distance people of different nations making vast preparations for war. "I followed their movements, their hurried preparations," she said. "I heard the clanking of arms, the heavy roll of the cannon as they were placed in position, In the centre of the plain, a frightful beast was receiving the homage of the multitude, while Jesus at no great distance, the rope of a criminal about His neck, was being rudely dragged hither and thither. Soon some men, true supporters of Satan, tried to vent their rage upon that sweet and innocent Lamb. They slashed His sacred limbs with unheard-of cruelty. Seized with horror, and unable to support the sight, I turned away! . . . It was made known to me that this frightful crime is that of the whole world, who wish to banish Our Lord from the universe, to render His Name an object of execration, and by force of contempt, to efface it from the memory of men, to annihilate it. But not being able to attack

Himself in the splendor of His glory, they strike at the Church, His mystical Body, in which He can always be humiliated and made to suffer."

Next day, the same vision, in a more striking manner even than the first, was repeated in her prayer. She shed abundant tears of sorrow. She said: "Terrible is that which awaits the world! It will not be men coping with their fellow-men. It is God Himself, by the ministry of His angels, who will combat the infernal legions. It was revealed to me that the just, through incessant prayer, will not be shaken. If we knew how much fidelity God exacts of His spouses on the days on which His justice is exercised with so much severity upon the earth! I used to ask to die. . . but after what I had seen, I begged it no longer. I prefer to live in order to share the sufferings of our Sisters even to the end, and if it please Him, to offer myself to Him as a victim of expiation."

On September 10, 1875, at morning prayer, it was "the earth made desolate" that was placed before her sight. "All around me," she said, "bore an aspect of sadness and mourning. Our Lord addressed to me these words: *"France sleeps. Some sleep the sleep of cupidity; others that of sensuality, impiety, tepidity, and death!"* Then taking a branch in His hand, and making the sign of the Cross over the space, He said: *"France, arise from thy sleep of death!"* And on the instant, all was changed. Joy shone on every countenance, all nature revived. Beholding the universal jubilation, I thought: O how God loves France!—and I had the presentiment of our safety."

These visions animated our Sister's hope for a new and flourishing era for religion. When interrogated on the subject, she answered simply: "Our Lord has never

made known to me the precise time. I can speak of it only from the impression made upon me, and my words have no other value than personal opinion. God does not measure time as we do. One year of suffering appears to us an age, but before the Lord a thousand years are but as yesterday. Even should I be instructed on the moment of the divine mercies, I should not trust too much to it. I know too well the power of prayer over the designs of God. It mitigates the sentences of His justice, and shortens the duration of His chastisements."

On January 3, 1876, the most perfect personification of prayer was shown her. "I saw in spirit," she says, "Moses on a hill-top. His arms were extended, his eyes fixed on heaven, and he seemed to aim at doing violence to God by the fervor of his supplications. At his feet, two armies in battle array, were making ready for the combat. In that of the wicked, I heard dull sounds of wrath and ill-repressed murmurs and imprecations. "*Behold their rage,*" said Our Lord to me. "*They would annihilate Me!*" At the same instant, I received a transient impression in my soul. It was something so infernal that no word can express it. Then turning my eyes to the side of the good, I saw many men whose hearts were sincerely devoted to the cause of God and the Church, ready to defend their rights at the peril of their life. But alas! the number of Christians, weak, undecided, wavering between the interests of their Faith and those of their ambition, was incomparably greater. The confused noises that reached my ears from all sides, convinced me of the greatness of the danger. Once more, I understood that our safety will come only from prayer. Yes, without incessant prayer, we are lost."

Lastly, on September 11, 1876, during the Community Mass, the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord appeared to her again on the steps of the altar. From His adorable lips came these words; "I will take care of this house. But pray for the world!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

Sister Marie-Catherine's Last Years.

Sister Marie-Catherine had now reached the evening of life. She was at the age in which existence is shorn of its joys and supports, as in the autumn our fields are despoiled of their flowers and fruits. To purify her and to raise her more and more above the things of sense, Almighty God added the refining operations of His grace to those imposed by nature at an advanced age. The gifts which He once prodigally showered upon her, were now given only in measure, as if He feared that the continuance and excellence of His favors might wound that perfect annihilation which ought to mark the declining days of His faithful servant. Having given so much to this generous soul, He now withdrew all from her, leaving her nothing but the joy of returning to her Benefactor all that she had received from Him. "Thou alone, O my God!" she loved to say to Him? "Nothing but Thee! Thou alone dost suffice for me! All the rest is Thine. Take even that of which I do not know, and which I would wish to offer Thee if I did but know it!" And God came sword in hand, to root out even to the last fibre any personal satisfaction hidden in the folds of

her heart. The same presence of Our Lord was granted her, but without those delicious transports, those ravishing joys which in the past she could not restrain. Every grace, however elevated, seemed surrounded with suffering. From time to time, however, God allowed her eyes to gaze upon a far-off reflection of His glory. She received it simply, and saw it pass without regret. Is not God superior in splendor and beauty to all the marvels of His grace? Let us now record the last illuminations with which Sister Marie-Catherine was favored. A little while now, and those lights will give place to those of the intuitive vision. . . for an eternity!

In May, 1877, our city celebrated the presence of the German Emperor. A grand illumination of the towers of our ancient Cathedral was projected. In vain, did the Municipal Council, as well as several members of the Chapter, lay before them the most potent arguments for renouncing that design. The preparations were continued with unabated activity. That evening, the crowd of spectators, though saddened by sombre presentiments, contemplated with a mixture of admiration and fright, a spectacle far surpassing anything that had ever before been presented to their sight. Some hours later, the fire bells sounded. The Cathedral was in flames. It would be useless to try to depict the conflagration of the gigantic edifice. At the first intimation of the dire catastrophe, Sister Marie-Catherine was kneeling before a statue of the Blessed Virgin; and there with all her heart she had uttered one of those fervent prayers of faith so mighty in their power as to force God, as it were, to change the course of events. She arose, sure of having been heard, and went to a window from which she could watch the progress of the flames. They had already gained the

towers, and the lookers-on saw with terror that the one which supported the spire in which hung "*La Mutte*," the great bell weighing 11,000 kilogrammes, was enveloped by them. Men looked at one another in consternation, and asked what would be the consequence of such a fall. With a glance, Sister Marie-Catherine measured the greatness of the peril. Then turning toward her Superioress, she said in a tone calm and convincing: "The fire will not go any further. The Blessed Virgin will protect the rest of the building. She has promised me." She told us later, "I never had a firmer hope of being heard."—Soon after, the voice of the bell-ringer proclaimed: "*The tower is saved!*"... and from the excited crowd arose the cry: "*The tower is saved!*" It was time, for one moment later, "*La Mutte*," would have fallen and crushed the edifice.

At the breaking out of the fire, the Emperor and the Prince Imperial hurried to the scene. Both appeared deeply affected. But who could say the grief of our saintly Bishop, Mgr. du Pont des Loges? The thought of him was uppermost in all hearts, his name on every tongue... Tears fell from his eyes and told his grief. When he appeared in his dear Cathedral to view the smoking ruins, his people blocked his way, begging his blessing. Hundreds followed their beloved pastor even to the episcopal palace. We shall say nothing of our own fright during the sad disaster. Suffice it to say that only a very short distance separated us from the Cathedral, and from all parts of the convent we could view the terrifying scene. We had, in consequence of the fire, the consolation of sheltering in our sanctuary for some days the Most Blessed Sacrament. A beautiful little incident occurred when the Sacred Host was being carried

to our church from the Cathedral. A pious baker, hastily dropping his work, and listening only to the impulse of faith, seized a lighted candle, and followed the priest who was bearing his Divine Master to our church.

It was evident that the prayer of our dear Sister was truly a cry of the soul which pierced the Heart of God and arrested the course of His justice. Its strength came from the vehemence of her love. She became a powerful instrument of apostolic life for Holy Church. Do not all the members of this great family form the mystical Body of which Jesus Christ is the Head and the Heart? It is not from Him that flows the grace which animates the whole body? Sister Marie-Catherine wept over the trials to which the Spouse of Christ is exposed by satanic malice in those troublous times. Knowing that suffering which repairs and expiates, forms her strength, our good Sister courageously gave herself up to it, in order to overthrow, in some manner, the dikes that prevent the flow of God's mercy upon the world.

In one of her visions, our Sister saw the magnificent spectacle of the triumph of Our Lord. "The scene was but a passing one," she said. "But never had any manifestation of heavenly glory approached this one." . . . During the last months of her life, we said to her: "Surely you will not die before your eyes have seen the glorious victory of Our Lord over His enemies."—"Ah!" she replied, "how short and far removed are our views from those of God! We take all things in a positive sense, but who can know the moments chosen by Him?"—The Pope being the Head of the Church, destined to perpetuate the work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit in the world, she offered for him the greater part of her prayers and sufferings. She tenderly venerated the au-

gust Pontiff Pius IX., the instrument in God's hands of things so great, and she ardently implored the prolongation of his life. Just at this time, alarming reports were circulated regarding his health, but they were not believed, as such rumors were often afloat. The hour, nevertheless, was at hand when God was about to crown so many labors endured for His glory, such self-immolation accepted with meekness, surpassed, it would seem, only by that of the Saviour Himself. February 7, 1878, brought the news so afflicting to every Catholic heart: "Pius IX. is no more!"—Sister Marie-Catherine was deeply grieved, and all her supplications were for the speedy deliverance of the Holy Father, if God's sanctity still exacted some expiation. Shortly after, during the Community Mass, she saw the Pope mounting to heaven, surrounded by a magnificent cortège. It reminded her somewhat of the Ascension of Our Lord. She said no more, and we refrained from questioning. The fifty-two saints whom Pius IX. had canonized, the twenty-six whom he had beatified, and the two hundred Japanese martyrs whom, also, he had numbered among the Blessed,—was it their mission to assist at his death, and introduce him into the sojourn of the elect? The Blessed Virgin, whose Immaculate Conception his infallible word had proclaimed, and St. Joseph, declared by him the Protector of the Universal Church,—did they not gratefully acknowledge in glory all that they had received from his zeal and piety? And to refer to our own indebtedness, what must have been the reception extended him by Blessed Margaret Mary for his cooperation in the extension of the worship of the Sacred Heart, and what that from St. Francis de Sales, whom the deceased Pontiff had honored with the glorious title of Doctor, which

stamps his teachings with so great authority! The venerated Pius IX. greatly loved the writings of St. Francis de Sales. They formed the daily nourishment of his soul. What must have been the meeting of those two saints in the light and beatitude of eternal love! . . .

On the 13th of the following December, one of our family festivals, namely, that of the blessed passage from earth of our holy Foundress, St. Jane de Chantal, we gathered around our venerated Sister Marie-Catherine to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of her holy profession. The dawn of her religious life had been full of promise, but its realization far surpassed every hope then awakened. She had reached the decline of life in the full possession of her charming vivacity, her youthfulness of heart, her childlike simplicity added to which was her consummate virtue. Doubtless, heaven united in our joy; and Jesus, who for so many years had honored her with astonishing favors, reserved for this day some foretaste of eternal felicity. But this is the secret of the spouse. She never revealed it. She wore a white crown, symbol of her virginal alliance with Jesus, for eight hours, that is, from morning till evening, and was the queen of the day, We did all in our power to celebrate piously and joyously this sweet feast of gratitude and holy love.

The sight of her advanced age, her faculties in full vigor, her virtue ever on the increase, made us instinctively dread the approach of the moment that would snatch her from our love. But a new summit, steeper and more rugged than any before, lay in her heavenward way.

Her physical well-being was not in keeping with her mental vigor. It cost her much to be condemned to inaction when all around her seemed to claim her experienced cooperation. "My God," she would exclaim when

complaining to Our Lord of a rigor to which she was not accustomed, "I already behold heaven, and I am ready to fly thither. I think that I am about to possess the only Object of my desires, and yet Thou dost prolong my life. If it were, indeed, to spend myself in Thy service,—but no! it is only to lead a languishing and useless life!"—In vain, did she put forth all the energy of her will to rise above her weakness? Her body, lately the willing servant of her soul, now lent her but little aid. But what was refused her in action was made up with large compensation by suffering. During one of her annual retreats, when the intensity of her suffering prevented her from occupying herself with the thought of Our Lord, she said to Him lovingly: "My Jesus, Thou hast taken everything from me, even Thyself!"—For only answer, the Divine Saviour caused a series of physical sufferings and mental miseries to pass before her, and He told her that He left her on earth only to suffer. Yes, to suffer and to pray for sinners, was henceforth to be for this true lover of the Cross the only solace of her exile. One day, when she appeared to be near her end, suddenly recovering consciousness, her first words were: "O Mother, how near I have been to eternity! I was preparing for death by interior acts, when two of our deceased Sisters came to tell me that it was the will of God that I should remain awhile longer on earth to suffer."—Next day, during Holy Mass, the two religious, whom she had not recognized, appeared to her again resplendent with light and beauty. The first was our beloved Mother Sister Marie-Thérèse Dorr, and the second our good Sister Marie-Victoire Pepin. On another occasion, being under a great increase of suffering, we wished to make her take some relief. "Mother," said she, "it would be useless.

The moment of my death is not far off. On Holy Saturday, at the sound of the resurrection bell," (the *Gloria*) "Our Lord told me that I had heard it for the last time."— Her Superioress, anxious to retain in the Community, a soul so cherished by God, had many prayers offered for the prolonging of her life. Though ignorant of this, the Sister went to her one day, and said: "They have prayed for me. and I feel that they will be heard. My life will be prolonged, but another victim will be chosen." And so it happened. Shortly after, the Sister Infirmarian was attacked by inflammation of the lungs and, contrary to our expectation, died. During her short illness, seeing the grief of our Mother, Sister Marie-Catherine frequently said to her: "The decree has gone forth. God wills it. Mother, why did you pray so much for me?"—To see her exile prolonged at the very moment that God had marked for the termination of her earthly course, gave her occasion for making an act of rare submission. Her ardent desire found vent in words like these: "O how I long to contemplate Jesus, my life, the only good of my heart! O when I shall see Thee, my Jesus, I shall fall at Thy feet, I shall water them with my tears, I shall cover them with my kisses, I shall cling so closely to Thee, that nothing will be able to separate me from Thee!"

Her life was now one long sigh, and burning desire for the heavenly country. Whatever turn the conversation might take, we were sure to hear her revert to her favorite subject, heaven. "Have you ever understood what it is to see Jesus, not for one instant, nor in the obscurity in which He is pleased to hide Himself in order that we may not fear to approach Him, but to see Him forever, face to face, in light and love?" — Then to console herself in her long expectation, she drew hope from

her very weakness: "It is impossible that such a state as mine should last long. Life is slowly ebbing, the lightest breath would be sufficient to extinguish it. But, my Lord, if in Thy designs unknown to me, it please Thee to support me in this way, and allow me to hover between life and death, *fiat*! Thy holy will before all and above all! Should my sufferings increase immeasurably, and should they last indefinitely, *fiat* for to-day, *fiat* even till the end of the world, if so it please Thee!"

A still higher act of abandonment was exacted of her by Almighty God, one that comprised a complete sacrifice of her spiritual interests. She lay one day unconscious for an hour and a half, dead to the outer world. When giving an account of the danger of death in which she was at the time, she said: "My first desire in that state was to receive the last Sacraments. Then I thought: 'My God, above and beyond all the helps with which Thou dost strengthen the soul at the moment of its passage from time to eternity, I place the grace of entire abandonment to all the dispositions of Thy adorable providence. Whatever it determines for me, I accept unreservedly. To expire in that act of perfect abandonment, will be enough for me. All the rest belongs to Thee.'"

The sanctity of God of which she had so often received the impression, did not permit her to suffer any illusion with regard to the rights exercised in purgatory by His inexorable justice; but a blind and unshaken confidence assured her that Our Lord would not condemn her to separation from Himself, and that pure love would consume the imperfections inherent to human weakness. "When I leave this exile, God will give such intensity to my love," she said, "that Jesus will receive me into His

arms, and I shall repose in His Heart. Nothing can rob me of this hope. Ah, my God! hast Thou treated me with mercy so astonishing only to leave Thy work unfinished? O I cannot think it! Is it not the end that crowns the work? With firm hope, I expect from Thee an end worthy of Thee, and that is, to die in an act of Thy pure love. It will be Thyself, I know, who will put it into my heart.”—When asked one day how this word of Holy Scripture: *It is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God*, affected her, she answered: “I do not know what God will permit at my last moments. I adore His designs, whatever they may be. I can only speak of my present dispositions. Death will certainly be a hard passage, but I do not dwell on what is frightful to nature. God desires me to think of it in a more elevated manner. Ah! at the thought of the humiliation of my body, condemned to be the food of worms, I experience a feeling of joy, a thrill of happiness. Our Lord will regain His rights. He will be avenged upon His sinful and unfaithful creature, and my annihilation will increase His glory. What are we of ourselves, poor miserable creatures? Have we upon earth any other interest than that of God?”—Her generous soul knew full well what was meant by the desire that she so often expressed to Our Lord of dying in an act of pure love. Far from yielding to any movement of presumption, she said: “Ah, if we knew what we ask of God in this prayer, how many souls would recoil affrighted! Without experiencing it, one could never comprehend the suffering it entails. Pure love is found only on the Cross! Ah, how many bloody steps in life before arriving at the *Consummatum est!*”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Death of Sister Marie-Catherine.

The year 1884 was for Sister Marie-Catherine one of an increase of sufferings. Paralysis was daily gaining ground, and the difficulty of movement made our venerable octogenarian look forward to the time when she would be condemned to total inaction. Up to the departure of our pupils, she faithfully remained at her post of obedience and charity. But it now became necessary to provide for her that absolute rest and retirement which her infirmities demanded and her long years of devoted labor claimed. Vaguely foreseeing this change in her life, she was ignorant of the day and the hour that would see its fulfilment, nor did her Superioress enlighten her. The wise Mother wished to give her another chance to rise to the still higher degree of perfection which God demanded of her generosity. Those parts of the building which she was about to leave, and which, she knew well, she would never again revisit, had been the scene of her labor for the last fifty-six years. They had witnessed her life of suffering and expiation, as well as the innumerable favors received from the divine predilection. She could not take a step there without encountering ineffaceable memorials of the love of her Jesus, whose surprising intimacy was full of delights for her soul . . . The news of her discharge was imparted to her at a moment least expected. Neither surprise nor emotion was betrayed on her countenance, nor did an imperfect word escape her lips. She made this sacrifice as she had made

all others, her eyes fixed on God. What surer confirmation of the graces that she had received than this detachment!

A little cell belonging to the infirmary was prepared for her. On entering it, she heard from the lips of Our Lord that He led her into it in order that she might suffer in it, but that her time would not be long. Her arm-chair was placed near a window overlooking the garden. We thought to please her by the sight of nature's beauties, and above all by that of the recreations of our pupils to whose joyous frolics she had never known how to be indifferent. Scarcely, however, had some day's flown by, when she asked to be removed to a more retired position, for the cries of joyful recognition that greeted her alarmed her humility and her spirit of detachment. The love of Jesus pressed her to quit all in order to live with Him in mind and heart. While waiting for Him to free her from exile, she wished that all her desires should rise to Him alone. "When one is as near to eternity as I am," she said, "he ought to think only of God, and His perfections, and of Our Lord. At so serious a time, all earthly things are nothing. When they amuse the sick, they distract them from God." On the same principle, she requested that no member of her family should be apprised of her approaching end. She would, doubtless, have received some testimonies of sympathy, which would have diverted her from her resolve to live without joy. She acknowledged that nothing earthly gave her a thought. "The created no longer concerns me. Our Lord alone can satisfy me."

Our beloved Sister, no longer occupied with any employment, lived the community life. O how she appreciated the privilege, and how zealous she was to appro-

priate its merit! Her faith, as well as her filial sentiments, made her greatly value the cares bestowed upon her by her Superioress, whose frequent visits rejoiced her. Obedience was to her full of merit, and she would have wished to act only in conformity with her Superioress' intention. "My dear Mother," she would say, "reprove me as you would your youngest novice. Would that I could begin my life all over, in order to obey always!"—Not less was her esteem of open and unbiassed frankness toward the Superioress. "Mother, will your Charity tell our Sisters that the good Master has made me feel at the moment of death, how sweet it is always to have had an upright heart toward my Superioress? We must make no use of roundabout ways in the service of God even for good."—Providence arranged for Sister Marie-Catherine in her humble retreat some communications with an uncloistered religious who, yielding to her attraction to the contemplative life, would have wished to taste the sweets of entire separation from the world. She was, in short, secretly nourishing disgust for her own vocation. Conscience was urging her to open her heart to her Superioress, but she imposed silence upon it with the words: "What good would that be? Do I not already know what Mother would reply?"—The struggle went on, and the only care of the poor religious was to hide it under a serene air. She was in this state of mind when she made a visit to our saintly octogenarian. The conversation was pious and animated, no allusion being made to the temptation of which we have spoken. At length, the visitor withdrew, sure of not having compromised herself on the subject nearest her heart. She had just reached the threshold of the door, when Sister Marie-Catherine addressed to her these words in a tone of in-

spiration: "Sister, I charge you to go as soon as you can to your Superioress, and declare to her your temptation. It is the only means to get rid of it, and to recover peace and joy of soul." Useless to add that the advice, followed with docility, was successful.

For six months longer, Sister Marie-Catherine, with the assistance of two Sisters, was able to go to the choir every morning for Holy Communion. On Holy Saturday of the year 1885, she remained fasting until ten o'clock, in order not to be deprived of the Divine Food which alone rendered her exile supportable. Some days after, her limbs refusing service, she had to be carried to the Holy Table. When we rejoiced with her on the fact that, despite the serious state in which she was, she was able to receive the Bread of Life every day, our holy Sister replied with an air of deep humiliation: "O yes, what a grace! I, poor little villager! poor little ant!"—It was evident that her humility suffered whenever that exceptional favor was recalled. "Ah, Sisters!" she would quickly respond, "my Communions are for you. I wish nothing for myself alone. I share all with your Charities."—"It is really a miracle," we said to her on another occasion, "that after nights of prolonged suffering, you are able to rise every morning and be carried to the choir."—"Yes," she replied. "Sometimes I feel as if I should die on the way. But the thought of receiving one's God! Does it not give strength not one's own? To receive one's God! . . . I am so happy to suffer, and thus be able to give something to Our Lord. He has for so long been giving to me! . . ."

Her prolonged pilgrimage was sweetened by the joy of being able to help the Sisters that had gone before her to the heavenly country, but who were, perhaps, liquidat-

ing some debts to Divine Justice. Witness the following facts: Sister Marie-Catherine had been removed from the large infirmary the same hour that our lay-sister N. N. expired there. At the very instant of her death, she was visited by the dear soul, who came to say adieu. Her purgatory lasted two and a half months in expiation of some disrespect toward the Sisters, and especially for the tone of authority that she assumed in the exercise of her employment. Sister Marie-Catherine felt her near her all that time. At last, on the 17th of October, the Feast of our Blessed Sister Margaret Mary, she appeared to her all radiant, thanked her, and said: "I am going to enjoy God!"—On December 11th, 1884, our good Sister Marie-Raphael de la C . . . slept in the Lord after only a few days' illness. The most perfect abandonment to the Divine Will had marked every moment of it. On the 28th of January, about ten in the morning, she appeared to Sister Marie-Catherine, and said in an accent of joy:—"I am going to heaven. I am going to see God, and to enjoy the glory of my Holy Founder!"

With the progress of her malady, her difficulty in moving increased, and our venerable invalid had to resign herself to accept all those services, which she herself had lavished on so many others. O how painful to her was this subjection! To depend upon others for the most commonplace details of existence, had ever appeared to her a dreaded subjection; but when Our Lord laid upon her that new cross, she received it from His hand just as she would have received His consolations. Who could estimate how mortifying this disposition of Divine Providence was to her sensitive and delicate nature? And yet an easy and holy liberty reigned in all her conduct. To all the Sisters without distinction, she ac-

corded a most amiable welcome, and she framed her words to the needs of each. Shortly before her death, she said to a Sister who had come to visit her: "No one has ever loved her Community more than I."—Then with an expressive gesture, and raising her eyes to heaven, she exclaimed: "O how much I have loved it!"—To her Superioress, who was telling her to pray for all of us, she replied: But, Mother, how could I forget the interests of our dear Community! I loved it even before you were born."

Simplicity was truly the seal that marked the close of her life so highly favored, and holy indifference her habitual practice. "*Ask nothing, refuse nothing.*" Every suggestion of the infirmarian met her ready acquiescence. She desired just what was given her, and nothing else. If they offered her a drink, she took it; if it was deferred, she waited patiently. This was her rule, the law of her fidelity, and from it she never swerved for an instant. She accepted privation as readily as relief. "I watch over the least movements of my heart," she once said in confidence, "that Our Lord may have all, and when I visit its corners, and find Him alone everywhere, I feel happy."—"I wish no longer anything but the will of God in life, in death, in my sufferings; in the abundance or in the dearth of interior consolations."—And again: "I am like a lamb extended on the altar of sacrifice, and in momentary expectation of immolation. Jesus will strike the blow, therefore I do not fear, for all in Him is love."

Congestion of the brain with other precursory signs of approaching dissolution, determined the Superioress to have Extreme Unction administered, but not Holy Viaticum, since Sister Marie-Catherine had communicated in the choir that very day, the first Friday in July. She

received the announcement with her usual submission, saying, however, that the end of her life had not yet come. She lived, in effect, three weeks longer.

When our pupils heard of her serious condition, they begged the favor of a last visit to her, in order to confide to her the interests of their soul as well as those of their families, to many of whose members the good old Sister was personally known. She received them with her wonted affability. "Young ladies," she said to them, "I was once your age, and now I am going to die. O if you knew how much I value the happiness of having been called to live for God alone, to love Him alone! It is the greatest of graces! Sooner or later, like me you will be at your last hour. Live as good Christians if you desire to avoid the terror and agony of the supreme moment. A good conscience alone can bring you peace. O how earnestly I shall beg God that not one of you will be absent from the eternal union of glory!"—One of the pupils having asked her whether she did not at all fear death she answered: "Fear it? . . . O no! To die, is to see God, to possess Him alone, entirely, and for all eternity! I have long sighed for this happy moment. I have even to watch over myself in order not to desire it too much."—The calmness with which these words were spoken, the expression of happiness of her countenance made a most salutary impression on the young girls, who withdrew deeply moved. "How beautiful to die in that way!" they said among themselves.

Her sufferings increasing daily, left her no truce, no repose. Our physician assured us that he had never seen sufferings so acute at so advanced an age. "I live now only to endure," she often repeated. "O if I have by my pains the happiness of gaining some soul! Yes, my

Jesus, I would wish to suffer long and much.”—“Souls, my God, souls!” she sometimes cried out in fervent accents. “What can I do for Thee but give Thee them? I have no longer anything, all is Thine, the tree and its fruits. Take, take, then, just as much as pleases Thee!” On July 22d, some one asked her: “Are you suffering much?”—“Yes,” she answered, “My pains are intolerable. I am enduring real agonies, and I know not how I can bear them without dying.” Then after a short pause: “It is the body alone that suffers. The soul is entirely lost in Our Lord, and in Him it is impossible to see anything but goodness.”—The next day, the eve of her death, she said toward its close: “It is over. No one can do anything more for me”—“But when the creature can do nothing more, Jesus can do everything, and Jesus is all-powerful,” we replied.—“Yes,” she said. “But I no longer know how to speak familiarly to Him as I used to do. It seems to me that at the bottom of my soul, He is saying: ‘*We have not time.*’” The Superioress having come to give her a blessing as she did every night, the dying Sister said to her with an expression full of gratitude, “Mother, you are too kind! But how much we have to endure in order to die! O come, Lord Jesus, come!”—This was the last cry of love that left her lips.

That night was a restless one. At half-past four, however, at her own request, the attendants tried to get her up to go to Holy Communion. For forty years, if we except some Communions retrenched by way of trial, she had had the happiness of daily approaching the Sacred Banquet. But today her weakness triumphed over her courage, and she was obliged to desist from her effort. Again, her ardent desire induced her to make a sec-

ond attempt, but like the first, it was ineffectual. Our confessor was then hastily summoned to bring her Holy Viaticum and apply to her the plenary indulgence. No longer able to make herself understood by speech, the dying Sister opened her mouth and pointed to it with her finger, as if to say, "Ah, let Him come quickly! My Jesus! Soon it will be too late!" The hour had now come for the literal accomplishment of words uttered by her years ago: "When I shall no longer be able to communicate, I shall die."—She had recognized the Abbé Laurent, our confessor, as he entered. She had shown by a sign that she understood very well that he had brought to her her Jesus. But when after the *Confiteor*, the moment for Communion arrived, she had already entered into her agony. The faithful lover of the Blessed Sacrament was about to begin the eternal Communion. Indescribable emotion seized our souls while reciting the prayers of the Church in presence of the Divine Eucharist. It seemed as if Our Lord had disposed all things to come Himself and strengthen His spouse for the last struggle, and thus to realize these oft-repeated words of her confiding love: "I do not deserve, my Jesus, to follow Thee straight to heaven. But I shall cover myself with Thy merits, I shall cling so closely to Thee that Thou wilt not be able to separate me from Thee!"

Her end was a peaceful sleep. At a quarter before seven on Friday morning, July 22, 1885, our venerable Sister at the age of eighty-two years and four months, of profession fifty-five years, seven months, gave up her soul to Him whom alone she had loved, and whom she had served so faithfully during the whole of her long existence. After the *De Profundis*, as we accompanied to the tabernacle the Divine Friend who had come to pre-

side at her death, we were deeply touched by the words of the *Benedictus*, which we recited on the way: "*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, because He hath visited and redeemed His people!*"

Our beloved Sister was no longer with us. She had passed through the trials and sufferings of life, and she had risen superior to the greater part of the weaknesses inherent to fallen nature. We felt that she was in heaven, drinking long draughts at the source of sanctity and pure love. Here below, bound down by her earthly faculties, one ray of glory illuminating her soul, was sufficient to make her fall into ecstasy. But above, free from the sad conditions of human infirmity, she saw God face to face without faltering. Her soul, after sighing so ardently for the heavenly Jerusalem, had, at last, heard the ravishing words: "*Come, thou blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for thee from all eternity.*" Why should we not hope that she was at once admitted to eternal beatitude? Her power over the Heart of Jesus, so often shown by miraculous facts, authorized our confidence.

Her face preserved in death that expression of calm serenity which no human event had power to ruffle in life, and we pressed with a feeling of religious veneration and affection around her holy remains. Our Mother, foreseeing the desires of many who had known our saintly Sister, placed in her hands many objects of piety to which their deep respect and affection for her attached the value of a true relic. "God exalts the humble." This divine word was to receive a new fulfilment in this soul of whom the Lord had formed all the glory and all the riches. She had kept herself little and hidden in the secret of the Sanctuary, but at the very moment that she left that

sacred asylum, God began to exalt her here below by the unanimous regret that her death excited. Her virginal body, prepared by the fire of suffering for the glorious transformation of the elect, reposed in the midst of beautiful lilies, the gift of a friend whose fidelity followed beyond the tomb her whom she had long known. The innocence of the humble spouse of Jesus was well symbolized by their whiteness and fragrance. We would have wished to retain among us the blessed remains of our well-beloved Sister. But the laws forbade it. They now lie in the cemetery of Est, in our own lot, at the foot of the Cross and the statue of Mary Immaculate.

Many beyond our grate testified their respect for our dear deceased. We shall here record one, that of an ecclesiastic eminent for piety and learning.

“For almost ten years,” he says, “I was in communication with Sister Marie-Catherine. Through discretion I saw her, however, very rarely, her infirmities rendering it very difficult for her to go to the parlor, and also through respect for conventual rules. A pious person, one of Sister Marie-Catherine’s friends, had the kindness to ask for me the help of her prayers and advice whenever it was necessary. Allow me to relate a single fact which closes the life of Sister Marie-Catherine and puts the finishing-stroke to her charity in my regard. It was less than a month before her death, and I was being submitted to a most painful trial. At that time the venerable Sister could no longer quit her cell. It was told her in two words that I was in trouble, that I begged her to pray. . . . So laconic was the wording of the message that she could not possibly glean any insight to the affair; and besides, the trial to which I was subjected, the causes that had provoked it, and of which I myself was at the time

ignorant, were certainly unknown to her. She replied; 'Tell . . . that I have known about this affair for some time, especially for two months. I have prayed, but I am going to pray again, for it is necessary.'—For two months, in fact, as I learned later, this painful affair was going on unknown to me. Yes, it was necessary to pray. The situation already bad enough, became worse and worse. Days, months flowed by, and not a ray of hope on the horizon. . . . Sister Marie-Catherine prayed and, as she said, suffered for this intention. And behold! her prayer obtained for me not only resignation, but even something like sweet joy. . . the joy of making my sacrifice. Meantime, Sister Marie-Catherine sent me word that my trouble, and she mentioned the bitterest feature in it, would soon pass. Some days before her death, she again repeated that the situation would change soon, soon! . . . She left us to go to heaven. . . But she continued her intercession. . .

"The week in which she died, a ray of light appeared on my horizon, hitherto so laden with clouds. . . One month later, her prediction was realized word for word in spite of all difficulties, I shall even say, in spite of all human impossibilities.

"It is clear to me that only by extraordinary ways could she have had any knowledge of this event, or prophesy a happy issue.

"Her extraordinary gifts received from the Holy Spirit, she used largely for the good of Holy Church and the perfection and salvation of her neighbor.

"To Sister Marie-Catherine may be perfectly applied these words of Psalm XX.: '*Desiderium cordis ejus tribuisti ei, et voluntate labiorum ejus non fraudasti eum. Quoniam prævenisti eum in benedictionibus dulcedinis:*

posuisti in capite ejus coronam de lapide pretioso. Vitam petiit a te et tribuisti ei longitudinem dierum . . .

Thou hast given her the desire of her heart, and thou hast not withholden from her the will of her lips. For thou hast prevented her with blessings of sweetness, thou hast set on her head a crown of precious stones. She asked life of thee, and thou hast given her length of days forever and ever. . .

“May these lines glorify God in His servant and, laid upon her tomb, may they be to her the homage of my humble and filial gratitude!

“Useless to add that, since she has been in heaven, Sister Marie-Catherine has not ceased to watch over me and to pray for my intentions. I have already received the sweet assurance of this.”

All the testimonies of religious sympathy addressed to us on the occasion of her death, form a just tribute to the sanctity and the singular privileges with which God favored our dear Sister. Our former pupils, scattered today in so many places, and following vocations so different, with one voice praise the memory of her who, by her assiduous care and her inexhaustible devotedness, had been to them a true mother in their youthful days. Going back to their happy childhood, they have recalled and sent to us their remembrance of her ever living in their heart. Their grateful affection shows itself today in the fervent and faithful devotion that they entertain for her.

Many souls have already felt the effects of her powerful intercession. Prayers have been instantly heard, and special graces granted to novenas offered through her hands.

May Our Lord, who was pleased to recompense with numerous favors her simple and confiding faith, merci-

fully receive all who have recourse to Him by the mediation of this chosen one of His Heart!

We trust that we are not premature in expressing our hope to see our saintly Sister, at no very distant period, introduced to the Holy See for canonization.

May it please the Almighty, who exalts the humble, to make known to the Christian world the truly heroic virtues that adorned Sister Marie-Catherine Putigny during her mortal life, and the singular favors showered on her in His Divine Wisdom. Her life is, indeed, another proof of the *Wisdom of the Cross*. May it enlighten and strengthen many a Christian soul to understand the science of the saints, and to practise it! Our saintly Sister will, in this way, continue to draw souls to God by her rare example.

It remains for the voice of the Vicar of Christ, guided by the Holy Ghost, to pronounce upon the genuineness of the virtues of Sister Marie-Catherine. It is for him to place the divine seal upon the lessons taught in the preceding pages. May Jesus whose helpful presence was never wanting to her in this life, grant our prayer in behalf of His faithful spouse!

GOD BE PRAISED!

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